

MOBILITY STUDY ON THE WESTERN BALKAN COUNTRIES

2008

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Thematic report:

Barriers to international Mobility and the Integration of Researchers from Western Balkan Countries (WBC) in the European Research Area (ERA)

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Introduction

The thematic report „Barriers to international mobility and the integration of researchers from Western Balkan Countries (WBC) in the European Research Area (ERA) aims to provide an overview on researchers' mobility in Europe with a special focus on the Western Balkan Countries (WBC).

A description of the most common obstacles that are influencing advancement and development of researchers' mobility is provided. Furthermore the typical mobility problems that occur in the Western Balkan region are analysed and a special focus on each individual country is given.

The report is looking at the ERA mobility strategy of the European Commission and summarizing its content. In addition the most relevant actions for its implementation on both Member State and EU level during the years 2002-2008 are described. This ranges from legal and administrative measures to operative information portals. For each operative action the added value and importance for the Western Balkan region are identified and discussed.

A relevant part of the report is dealing with the current Seventh EU Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP7) as the main international source of funding for mobility of researchers and which impact the Western Balkan Countries (WBC) have in this programme.

As a conclusion the need for Western Balkan countries as well as for the EU Member States to take further actions towards international mobility for a completed integration into ERA is defined.

This thematic report is a fundamental summary and a survey for everyone that wishes to get a general picture of the development of the European mobility issues that has been taking place in the last few years. It gives the reader an added value on what kind of impact these actions have and will have on the Western Balkan region.

Definitions

Associated Countries (AC) – AC have science and technology cooperation agreements that involve the contributing to the EU-Framework Programme budget. The associated countries are not EU Memberstates but have the same right to participate under the Research Framework programme under the same conditions as an EU member state.

http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/who_en.html#provisions

Bologna Declaration - The Bologna declaration is the main guiding document of the Bologna process. It was adopted by ministers of education of 29 European countries at their meeting in Bologna in 1999. It proposed a European Higher Education Area in which students and graduates could move freely between countries, using prior qualifications in one country as acceptable entry requirements for further study in another.

<http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna>

ERA-MORE – The European Researcher's Mobility Portal, a joint initiative of the European Commission and the 34 countries participating in the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme for Research. The Portal is a one-stop shop for researchers seeking to advance their careers and personal development by moving to other countries. In addition to the information on training and jobs it provides, this electronic gateway is the entry point to a wealth of practical information on living, working and relaxing in the European countries involved, through the widening network of the national mobility portals complementing it (currently 31).

http://ec.europa.eu/eracareers/index_en.cfm?CFID=2814592&CFTOKEN=8b414ffcca879a84-3B63F355-A494-732C-376A44F8CF302ECB

European Neighbourhood Policy - The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) seeks to establish special relations with the neighbouring countries in Eastern Europe, the Southern Mediterranean and the Southern Caucasus for which accession is not in prospect. It was instituted as early as 2003 to share the benefits of enlargement with the neighbouring countries and avoid the emergence of new divisions, and forms part of the European security strategy.

The ENP focuses promoting democracy, freedom, prosperity, security and stability while building on existing relations with the various neighbouring countries. However, the establishment of such special relations depends on a mutual interest in upholding common values: democracy, the rule of law, human rights, good governance, the principles of a market economy and sustainable development.

The policy is put into effect by means of bilateral action plans reflecting the needs of the neighbour concerned and the reciprocal interests of that country and the Union. These plans set out an agenda for a period of three to five years, covering political and economic reforms, closer alignment of legislation with that of the Community, participation in certain Community programmes and the development or strengthening of cooperation and dialogue.

The pre-ENP bilateral agreements serve as a framework for pursuing the policy. The neighbouring countries also benefit from financial and technical assistance, mainly through the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) for the period 2007 – 2013.
http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/neighbourhood_policy_en.htm

European Research Area (ERA) – The ERA is a political concept proposed by the Commission and endorsed by the European Parliament and Council to overcome the present fragmentation of Europe's efforts in the area of research and innovation. The concept comprises organising co-operation at different levels, co-ordinating national or European policies, networking teams and increasing the mobility of individuals and ideas. It is an area where the scientific capacity and material resources of the Members States can be put to best use. An area that is open to the world where national and European policies can be implemented more coherently, and where people and knowledge can circulate more freely. The multi-annual Framework Programmes are the financial instruments to implement the ERA.

http://ec.europa.eu/research/fp6/mariecurie-actions/glossary/glossary_en.html

EU Framework Programme for research and technological development - Since 1984, research and innovation activities of the EU are grouped in one big programme, the Framework Programme. Framework Programmes are conceived for a period of 4 years, for the first time FP7 has a period of 7 years (2007-2013). They are elaborated and proposed by the Commission and have to be adopted by European Parliament and Council.

<http://ec.europa.eu/research/index.cfm?pg=why>

International Cooperation Partner Country (ICPC) - An ICPC is a Third Country classified by the European Commission as a low-income, lower-middle-income or upper-middle-income country and which is identified and listed in the Annex 1 of the 2007 'Capacities' Work Programme. Organisations from an ICPC can also receive funding by the EC.

http://ec.europa.eu/research/iscp/pdf/icpc_countries_en.pdf

International Mobility

The international dimension of the Specific Programme “People” reinforces international cooperation in FP7 by supporting researcher mobility and their career development. It is directed at increasing the quality of European research, both by supporting European researchers to undertake research abroad (Outgoing Mobility) and by attracting research talent from outside Europe (Incoming Mobility) and fostering research collaborations.

http://ec.europa.eu/research/iscp/pdf/peopleprogramme_en.pdf

Marie Curie Actions – Funding provided by the EU for the training, mobility and career development of researchers is implemented in the Marie Curie Actions. They have developed significantly in orientation over time, from a pure mobility fellowships programme to a programme dedicated to stimulating researchers' career development. The 'Marie Curie Actions' have been particularly successful in responding to the needs of Europe's scientific community in terms of training, mobility and career development. This has been demonstrated by a demand in terms of highly ranked applications that in most actions extensively surpassed the available financial support.

http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/people/home_en.html

Member States (MS) – The 27 EU-MS

http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/who_en.html#provisions

Research – Research and experimental development (R&D) comprise creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications (OECD's definition of research from the 2002 Frascati Handbook).

Third Country – A Third Country is neither an EU Member State nor an Associated Country
http://ec.europa.eu/research/fp6/mariecurie-actions/glossary/glossary_en.html

Western Balkan Countries (WBC) – Group of low or middle-income Third Countries neighbouring the EU, listed in the list of International Cooperation Partner Countries (ICPC) in Annex 1 of the 2007 'Capacities' Work Programme, including Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia.

http://ec.europa.eu/research/iscp/pdf/icpc_countries_en.pdf

1. Mobility in Europe – the aim of the European Research Area (ERA)

The Lisbon European Council (3/2000)

In the Lisbon Summit of March 2000¹ the European Commission proposed the creation of a European Research Area (ERA), emphasising the importance of human resources and mobility for the creation of a knowledge-based Europe. Together with the Member States it obliged itself to take the necessary steps to remove obstacles to mobility of researchers in Europe, aiming to create an attractive barrier-free environment for mobile researchers in Europe that attracts, develops and retains human resources and promotes innovation.

In June 2001 a Mobility Strategy for the European Research Area was adopted², identifying two main actions, i.e. legal improvements and financial measures. In parallel, the Council invited the Member States and the European Commission to take appropriate actions to make the ERA attractive to non-Member States, facilitating the admission of Third Country researchers undertaking international mobility.

The Barcelona European Council (3/2002)

The European Council welcomed the strategies and agreements made so far and called for further actions towards the goal that the European Research Area (ERA) should be the most competitive and knowledge based economy in the world by the year 2010. To meet this target around 700.000 new researchers will be needed and a GDP investment of 3% in research³.

The activities and measures being undertaken so far, implementing the Mobility Strategy for the European Research Area, will be outlined in detail in the next chapters.

¹ First Implementation Report on “A Mobility Strategy for the European Research Area”: SEC(2003)146 of 04.02.2003

² Communication from the Commission “A Mobility Strategy for the European Research Area”: COM(2001)331 final of 20.06.2001

³ Green Paper, “The European Research Area: New perspectives”: COM(2007)161 final of 04.04.2007

2. International Mobility

In the context of the European Community Framework Programmes for Research and Technology⁴, international mobility covers the mobility of researchers from Europe (EU Member State or Associated Country) to the rest of the world (Third Countries) and vice versa, while transnational mobility is identified whenever a researcher is leaving the own country and going to another to carry out research activities for a certain period of time.

Consequently, outgoing mobility represents those researchers leaving an EU Member State or Associated Country and going to a Third Country. Incoming mobility, on the contrary, describes researchers leaving a Third Country and going to an EU Member State or Associated Country.

Building on the Communication of January 2000 on the European Research Area (ERA)⁵ and on the subsequent Mobility Strategy for the ERA of 2001⁶, systematic support has been granted for international mobility actions under the 6th Framework Programme (FP6) Marie Curie scheme⁷, in order to encourage international mobility of researchers (see Chapter 6.4.1).

International actions in the mobility and training of researchers not only provide necessary opportunities for European researchers to gain experience and knowledge from around the world, and for those from elsewhere to gain experience and knowledge in Europe, but also to contribute to research and development during their stay elsewhere and on their return.

In the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) several Marie Curie actions support either incoming or outgoing mobility of researchers and fund reintegration. The international dimension becomes more and more a fundamental component for the development of the EU's future Human resources in R&D.

⁴ http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home_en.html

⁵ Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: "Towards a European research area": COM (2000) 6 of 18.01.2000

⁶ COM(2001)331 final of 20.06.2001

⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/research/fp6/mariecurie-actions/indexhtm_en.html

The FP7 international dimension, building on the experience of FP6, is based on five main action lines:

- Life-long training and career development opportunities in Third Countries (outgoing fellowships)
- Enhancing return and reintegration mechanisms for European researchers abroad
- Support in the frame of International S&T-agreements and of the European Neighbourhood Policy
- Marie Curie Host driven actions open to nationals from Third Countries
- A dedicated instrument for Third Country researchers (incoming fellowships)

Chapter 6.4.3 is outlining all Marie Curie actions under FP7, which are also relevant for Third Country researchers.

3. Mobility Barriers in Europe

Even since the Treaty of Rome in 1957⁸ free movement of people and the abolition of obstacles have been basic objectives of a united Europe.

Efforts have been undertaken to improve international mobility, to remove obstacles and make adequate funding available, since mobility of researchers across Europe is a condition to make the European Research Area (ERA) functioning.

With the Lisbon Summit in the year 2000⁹, ERA was born and so the aim to create an attractive barrier-free environment for mobile researchers in Europe that attracts, develops and retains human resources and promotes innovation, became even more essential.

In the same year the Research Council adopted a resolution¹⁰, inviting the EU Member States and the European Commission (EC) to cooperate in order to identify and take action in removing present obstacles to the mobility of researchers. The High-Level Expert Group on Improving Mobility of Researchers (HLG)¹¹ was convened, with the challenging task to prepare an analysis of obstacles and suggested actions to enhance mobility in the near future.

The HLG identified 4 different types of obstacles, all being independent from each other:

1. Legal and administrative obstacles to transnational mobility;
2. Social, cultural and practical obstacles to transnational mobility;
3. Obstacles to a European dimension in research careers;
4. Obstacles to intersectorial mobility (is not further analysed in this report)

These obstacles were summarized and described in the Mobility Agenda in 2001¹².

⁸ http://europa.eu/abc/treaties/index_en.htm

⁹ http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/smn/smn21/s21mn14.htm

¹⁰ SEC(2003)146 of 04.02.2003

¹¹ High-Level Expert Group on Improving Mobility of Researchers, Final Report of 04.04.2001

¹² Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament "A Mobility strategy for the European Research Area": COM(2001)331 final of 20.06.2001

3.1 Legal and Administrative barriers

Many of the mobility barriers have the character of legal or administrative hurdles.

The most common problems that a Third Country researcher or his/her family members face are visa, residence permit and work permit requirements. In addition, Third Country nationals often face immigration restrictions making it impossible for them to take up residence in the country for longer than short stays or for employment.

Many Third Country researchers do not enjoy free movement as EU citizens do, to travel to non-Schengen countries, for instance for scientific conferences or for the use of special research infrastructures.

The legal status of the researcher in the country of origin may also influence his or her status in the host country, depending on the national legislation, with wide-ranging consequences for rights and obligations (e.g. PhD students are in some countries considered mainly as employees, in others as students).

3.2 Social and cultural barriers

Researchers moving within the EU do not have the same status in all Member States, each applying its own rules to researchers in respect of social security contributions and direct taxation.

Differences in the social security systems and levels of taxation in different Member States may make it unattractive to move from countries with a high level of social security benefits or to countries with high taxation and social security contributions.

Consequently, Third Country nationals, obliged to leave the country at the end of their planned stay, may lose their pension contributions, if there is no bilateral social security agreement covering the situation. Non-EU citizens are also not covered by current EU regulations co-ordinating social security systems.

Bilateral taxation agreements are missing with countries outside of the EU, introducing a risk of double taxation.

A few of the EU countries already made some first efforts to tackle the mobility problems at the end of the 90's, contributing with some national actions. One good example is France who has a particular scientific visa procedure for Third Country nationals concerning entry in the EU for research purposes. Holders of such scientific visa are exempt from work permits.

Germany has also launched own rules for work permits for Third Country researchers funded within EU programmes.

Several Member States have reduced their income taxation regimes for a limited period of time for foreign researchers or highly skilled specialists.

When the Mobility Agenda was established in 2001 the access to information was still a huge problem for both researchers and administrators dealing with mobile researchers. This concerned both information about rules and regulations (local, national and EU-level) as well as information about opportunities for funding and vacancies. At this time there was no reliable one-stop information source and much of the information available was incorrect and not up to date.

Not only the aspect to gain information failed, but also personal assistance for legal and practical problems was lacking. In general, the responsibility was taken by the research institutions, of which some had international offices.

Lack of knowledge of the local language is a problem, particularly for less widely used languages. When language courses are provided, they may not be suitable for the needs of the researchers. Language problems can hamper the social integration and cause difficulties in the everyday life.

Researchers moving with their family may face barriers with the partner's career, children's education or day-care, suitable accommodation and obligations remaining in the home country (such as rent or mortgage payments).

These problems differ with the age of the researcher, length of the stay and the stage in the career. Only in a few Member States the moving costs are taken into account when funds are granted for research or teaching periods abroad.

Generally, when accommodation is available or subsidised for visiting researchers, it is only for short visits and does not include the researchers family.

3.3 Research Career Barriers

Mobility is an important component in a scientific career and can make it more effective. It is, however, not as attractive as it could be, as it is often connected with barriers for the researcher and his/her career:

Researchers who have been away from their national research system for some years often have difficulties to obtain a permanent or even temporary position upon return with the fear of being left 'out of the system'.

Consequently, for researchers with permanent positions, longer stays abroad and therefore longer absence may be a disadvantage for careers at home, if mobility is not recognised for seniority accreditation and/or career advancement. Also, the added intellectual value of a research period abroad is often insufficiently recognised.

Inadequate funding hampers mobility by having too few positions or fellowships or too little research project funding. In particular, very little funding is available to specifically encourage mobility at mid-career and senior researcher levels.

Competition between researchers from outside the country, non-nationals as well as nationals, and researchers already in the country is often faced regarding research funding or positions, due to limited advertising, nationally or locally orientated decision procedures and/or excessively strict language requirements.

Short submission periods for advertised vacancies may make it impossible for non-local researchers to apply, in particular if required diplomas must be officially translated or recognised before submission of application.

Non-recognition of diplomas is often based on the presumption that training obtained in another Member State is insufficient and that further training has to be followed in the host Member State. In some cases, the authorities in the host Member State carry out precisely detailed examinations of the academic qualifications, consisting of a strict comparison of

curricula. In certain Member States recognition of diplomas is not carried out by a central agency, but locally by the host institution.

Summary

This chapter was dealing with the general problems that international mobility faces and that were recognised in the Mobility Agenda in 2001. The next step for the European Commission (EC) was to prepare an implementation strategy both for the EC itself as well as for the Member States. Chapter 4 is dealing with mobility issues in Western Balkan and gives an overview of the typical obstacles that occur in this region.

4. The problems of mobility in the Western Balkan Countries

4.1 Background

Researchers mobility is a relatively new occurrence in the Western Balkan Countries (WBC). The region was long affected of a slow economic development and still feeling an after “war shock” in many areas. Research was not a high priority and mobility was poor. When researchers were going abroad only short term mobility was allowed and the fear of no return home existed. Research was more considered as an inconvenience as an advantage.

The Western Balkans have been struggling with a large amount of essential political, social and financial topics in the last few years. Consequently R&D and mobility have been neglected. The region has developed from a state directed economy to a market economy, new states have been “born” after the war with all their own regimes, and the national expenditures for R&D have been extremely low allocating resources on other parts.

The visa regulations are still very strict and dominating so even in some areas transnational mobility is not even allowed. Young researchers and academics need exchange programmes and integration into international research activities and networks.

Also the recognition and acceptance of the importance of an international experience, leading to a successful research career, is needed. When a Western Balkan researcher leaves for the EU it doesn't automatically mean brain-waste if the support and the conditions for re-integration are present.

Many of the Western Balkan universities do have bilateral or multilateral agreements with neighbouring or central European universities. If a student takes part in such exchange programmes it enhances his/her possibility to join a research visit later.

With the Bologna Process for higher education in early 2000 a new decade of change started. The importance of the Bologna Process is based on the fact that mobility already commences at the higher education level and develops towards a researcher career. Many of the WBC have used this process as an incentive to reform their higher education system.

Also the Western Balkan Action Plan for Science and Technology launched in 2003¹³ recognised mobility as an important topic that has to be focused on when the Western Balkans strive to be fully integrated in ERA.

4.2 The Bologna process

The Bologna Declaration of June 1999¹⁴ has launched a series of reforms needed to establish a European Area of Higher Education by 2010, including higher education reforms and the elimination of remaining barriers to the mobility of students and teachers. The Commission adopted the European Charter for Researchers which defines roles and responsibilities of researchers, including of doctoral candidates.

The three priorities of the Bologna process are:

- Introduction of the three cycle system (bachelor/master/doctorate)
- Quality assurance
- Recognition of qualifications and periods of study

The goals and instruments of the Bologna Declaration are:

- adoption of easily recognizable and comparable diplomas
- adoption of a system with two main levels
- introduction of credit system and the diploma supplement
- promotion of mobility
- promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance
- promotion of the European dimension in higher education
- education as a public good and lifelong learning
- regulation of student status, particularly regarding their role in managing higher education institutions

The contribution to the Bologna process has grown from 29 countries in 1999 to 46 in 2007 and all 5 WBC are part of the declaration¹⁵.

¹³ ftp://ftp.cordis.europa.eu/pub/greece/docs/eu_balkan_actionplan_030627.pdf

¹⁴ <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna>

¹⁵ <http://www.euractiv.com/en/education/bologna-process/article-117448>

Trough this process the WBC carry out reforms on the higher education system, modernising it and making it applicable to the rest of Europe. This is not only a process for some individual institutions but it requires strong support from political, administrative and academic side.

The reforms that are carried out trough the Bologna Process in the WBC in the higher education system are inevitable in developing the transnational mobility between researchers and in achieving trust and recognition of the academic institutions in WBC. An international cooperation already to some extent exist on the student level trough different exchange programmes (CEEPUS; TEMPUS).

4.3 The Western Balkan Action Plan

In June 2003 the EU Balkan Countries Action Plan on Science and Technology was established at the Thessaloniki Summit in Greece. This action plan symbolised a big step for enhanced scientific and technological cooperation between the EU and WBC. It is one of the most focused initiatives taken for WBC so far supported by the Commission, the EU Member States and the candidate countries.

The plan is dedicated to topics like development of infrastructure, improvement of human potential and mobility, building new R&D institutes, strengthening research networks, focusing on specific research fields etc. In terms of mobility the EU-Framework Programme offers good opportunities to create new projects and networks.

Its instruments have been multilateral, regional and bilateral activities, workshops and conferences, all contributing to the Western Balkan's integration in ERA. The duration of the Western Balkan Action plan was 2003-2006.

Although the plan is not running anymore its role as a fundamental base for the successful integration with the rest of Europe is given.

4.4 Important factors influencing mobility in WBC

As already mentioned we differ between incoming and outgoing mobility when dealing with international mobility issues. The next part is providing an overview of the typical problems connected to incoming vs. outgoing mobility in the Western Balkan countries. In connection to this overview a detailed analysis of the situation in each country is outlined.

(I) Incoming Mobility: WBC -> EU

(O) Outgoing Mobility: EU -> WBC

(I, O) Low developed R&D Infrastructure

One of the biggest challenges of successfully integrating WBC into the ERA is the establishment of R&D infrastructures. It was also mentioned as one of the large achievements in the Western Balkan Action Plan. Good infrastructure contributes to the improvement of cooperation, communication and networking between European universities, research institutions and funding organisations. The universities in the region recommend targeting specific support to R&D infrastructure development in line with the immediate priorities of the Accession and Pre-Accession countries.

(I) Low awareness of the importance of international mobility among researchers

Many researchers in the Western Balkan still don't acknowledge the importance of an research experience abroad as a vital step in a successful career. The acquiring of new knowledge and skills is beneficial especially when the researcher communicates and networks with his colleagues at home.

(I, O) Attractiveness of the research institutions

Many universities in the region still lack experience on mobility and don't offer suitable research programmes and exchanges. If an EU researcher is to be encouraged to choose a Western Balkan institution, facts like the promotion level, best practice experiences and good personal contacts with the institutions are relevant for the decision. Some universities only have exchange programmes on student and academic level but not further for PhDs and researchers. Institutions that offer some special services like technology parks or university spin offs are considered strong and more attractive.

(O) Language Problems

In order to obtain employment at a Western Balkan research institution, the foreign documentation, like degrees, working permits etc. have to be translated into local language. This is very time consuming and a local translator can be expensive. Although English to some extent is spoken, a lot of personnel like the employers at the laboratories still only speak the local language. Not all universities offer English courses.

(I, O) Recognition of degrees

Through the Bologna Process the recognition of the degrees has been improved.

(See chapter 4.2)

(O) Low salaries among researchers

The salary and rewarding level is still a very focal point when choosing a country for research purposes. Europe is though somewhat weak in comparison to e.g. USA: For a WBC the salary level in an EU country is reckoned as attractive and also leads to the fact that many “expatriates” do not return home. Research fellowships in the WBCs are often highly taxed.

(O) Administrative regulations concerning visas and working permits

Many of the countries still don't differ between researchers and economic immigrants regarding the VISA policy. Almost all WBCs require a residence and work permit for a foreigner in order to receive a contract of employment. Receiving a residence and work permit is still a very time consuming process and sometimes the duration of the administrative bureaucracy even exceeds the starting point of the project.

(I, O) Enhanced national funding for research

Although the international funding for mobility has been strengthened through the EU Framework Programme, also national funding and the positioning of research in each individual WBC has to be enhanced. This requires efforts from political side. Only through the financial support and acknowledgement of research as an essential knowledge source of the country, also Western Balkan researchers can acquire positions internationally and be more recognised. Vice versa the Western Balkan can receive a stronger position for outgoing mobility.

(O) Vacancy posting

Most of the research vacancies are posted in local newspapers in the local language. There is no competition between a national and foreign researcher for a position, according to merits and credits. In most cases the nationals are having a “home-advantage”. To prevent that, the vacancies should be posted through international media, like internet portals and above all in the English language. Additionally more transparency in the recruitment process is essential.

(O) Social insecurity

Most of the WBC have weak social systems for foreigners including social security and health. There is a lack of information and a much divided system.

The following overview is dealing with each country and its typical mobility problems.

4.5 Western Balkan Country review on mobility

4.5.1 ALBANIA

Brain drain in the last decades weakened the scientific and research community in Albania. Due to significant differences in life standards, outgoing mobility of Albanian researchers to the EU is still much higher than incoming.

Lack of programmes inviting foreign researchers to come to Albania, as well as administrative issues are the main obstacles for outgoing mobility to Albania. The procedures to receive work and residence permits take much too long.

These years Albania is going through a big reform concerning higher education and research, building up an integrated system of science. They will integrate several research institutions, some ministries and the academy of science, with the research units of the universities. The heart of the system will be the higher education institutions (universities) carrying out research.

Such reforms will definitely support building a trustworthy system where research will play an important role.

4.5.2 BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Several obstacles prevent foreign researchers from working legally in Bosnia-Herzegovina, such as difficulties to obtain residence permits and work permits or getting foreign academic degrees recognised.

In B&H, each entity and district has its own law related to employment of foreign nationals. All laws state that only foreign nationals, having a work permit may sign contracts with employers in B&H. Work permits, issued for a limited period of time, shall be issued only if the foreign national has a temporary or permanent resident permit and under the condition that no citizen of B&H with qualifications required by the employer is registered on the Employment Agency's list of unemployed. For foreign nationals with permanent resident permit, the permanent work permit may be issued¹⁶.

Recognition of academic degrees is one of the preconditions to get a work permit. Universities in B&H, in charge for the recognition process, have little understanding of foreign systems of education, and requests for recognition of foreign academic degrees are often rejected. According to law, the procedure for recognition of one diploma should not take longer than 60 days, but in practice it takes much longer since there are no penalty provisions if the procedure is not implemented in the determined period of time. Therefore, the recognition procedure may take up to one year in most cases, and sometimes even longer.

4.5.3 CROATIA

Croatia supports the idea of encouraging more young people to embark on research careers and fully agrees to take into account and to be guided by the general principles and requirements of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (see chapter 6.3).

Although most of these principles and requirements are already implemented, Croatia will need to adopt a legal provision or strategy document to improve career prospects as well as

¹⁶ Vucjak B. (2007): Mobility of Researchers in Western Balkan Region: Mapping exercise for identification of research organisations, Bosnia and Herzegovina

to adopt a general regulation that enables early-stage researchers to claim their right to supervision.

Croatia needs to develop an action plan setting out measures to really attract students to study sciences as well as a strategy to cope with the inevitable challenges of market competition.

The measures to be taken in order to facilitate the mobility of researchers and to support research careers are numerous. The recognition of experience gained through placements at other research institutions and of foreign educational qualifications is to be advanced. Launching programmes for stimulating job creation for young researchers is inevitable. Furthermore, improving housing conditions as well as investing in institutions and equipment, providing equal access to accommodation in student dormitories for talented but socially disadvantaged students and for children of Croatian war veterans, are to be fostered.

4.5.4 FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

During the past years, research in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has been mostly pursued individually and there were no results or exploitation of research work.

The most significant support to the socio-economic transformations, to the higher education reform and to higher education capacity building is provided by the European Community Programme TEMPUS. This Programme supports intensive cooperation among higher education institutions in FYR of Macedonia, the EU Member States, the candidate countries and the CARDS countries.

Mostly experienced obstacles to outgoing mobility are initially language barriers, the visa issue and limited capacities of university administration to support foreign students. Financial obstacles, especially concerning student loans and grants being very low to cover costs of studying even at the home institution, cause limited access to European mobility programmes.

Finally, very often difficulties with the recognition at the home and host institution are faced! There are important challenges to the universities in FYR of Macedonia safeguarding academic and research standards as well ensuring the quality of higher education throughout

the flexibility of the curricula. Not least important is ensuring intellectual freedom and making overall education processes democratic by giving due consideration to social, ethnic, and gender issues, all in addition to academic achievements.

FYR of Macedonia puts great effort to remove the obstacles to mobility as an important aspect of societal and economic growth. Macedonian academic community especially encourages young researchers to participate in all available mobility programmes. However, it is also important to think within the country about ways to improve mobility at the European, but national and institutional levels, and to propose effective means of promoting mobility in general. Special policy measures were developed to stimulate mobility of Macedonians from the neighbouring countries to pursue studies in FYR of Macedonia.

4.5.5 MONTENEGRO

According to the Law on Employment and Work of foreigners¹⁷, a foreigner has to obtain a residence and work permit in order to sign an employment contract. Work permits are issued by the Employment Office of Montenegro to foreigners who have permanent resident permits. The Employment Office has 30 days to decide on a work permit request. After the work permit is issued, the employer has the obligation to sign a contract with the foreigner within 15 days¹⁸.

The recognition of foreign higher education qualifications is settled by the respective faculty at the university.

4.5.6 SERBIA

Incoming mobility of researchers to Serbia is generally influenced by lack of attractive research opportunities due to the low researchers' salaries and the lack of English language courses at universities. Administrative obstacles aggravate the process of obtaining residence and work permits as well as the recognition of degrees (despite the ongoing

¹⁷ <http://www.gom.cg.yu/files/1175075336.pdf>

¹⁸ <http://webmob.masfak.ni.ac.yu/sitegenius/topic.php?id=298>

reform of the educational system). In general, there is low awareness about the importance of foreign researchers' inflow¹⁹.

According to the Law on Employment of Foreigners in Serbia²⁰, prerequisites for foreigner's employment are residence and work permit. If the Employment Office has unemployed local residents on its waiting list, that have the same qualification as a foreigner who applied for the specific job position, then local residents have the priority.

The university or council of the respective faculty is responsible for the recognition of foreign higher education qualifications. The procedure should normally take up to 30 days, but in some cases it takes 60-75 days.

4.6 Bilateral Science and Technology Agreements

Several EU Member States have signed bilateral memorandum agreements to strengthen the cooperation in the area of research and technology with Western Balkans. Such Memorandums increase the mobility of the scientists and the foundation for joint projects.

The attached table shows an overview of the current bilateral science and technology agreements²¹. The agreements duration is between 2 and 4 years.

Signed agreements X

Planned agreements (p)

Bilateral S&T agreements between WBC – WBC/ WBC - INT

	Albania	BiH	Croatia	FYR of Maced	Monte- negro	Serbia
Austria			X	(p)	(p)	(p)
Belgium					(p)	(p)
Bulgaria			(p)	X	(p)	(p)
Czech Rep.						(p)

¹⁹ Korac Z. (2007): Development of Researchers Mobility Policy Guidelines for the Region of Western Balkans, Regional Environmental Center

²⁰ <http://webmob.masfak.ni.ac.yu/sitegenius/topic.php?id=297>

²¹ <http://www.see-science.eu/uimg/bilateralagreements.jpg>

Cyprus				X		X
France			X	X	(p)	X
Germany		X	X	X	(p)	X
Greece	X	(p)	X	(p)	X	X
Hungary			X		(p)	(p)
Italy	X	(p)		(p)	(p)	
Poland	X				(p)	
Portugal						(p)
Romania	X	(p)	(p)	(p)	(p)	(p)
Slovenia	X	X	X	X	(p)	X
Slovak Rep.						X
UK				X		
<i>Albania</i>		<i>(p)</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>(p)</i>	
<i>BiH</i>	<i>(p)</i>		<i>(p)</i>	<i>(p)</i>	<i>(p)</i>	<i>(p)</i>
<i>Croatia</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>X</i>		<i>X</i>	<i>(p)</i>	<i>X</i>
<i>FYROM</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>(p)</i>	<i>X</i>		<i>(p)</i>	<i>X</i>
<i>Montenegro</i>		<i>(p)</i>	<i>(p)</i>	<i>(p)</i>		
<i>Serbia</i>			<i>X</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>(p)</i>	
Argentina						(p)
Belarus						(p)
China				X		(p)
Cuba						(p)
India						(p)
Israel				X		(p)
Japan				X		(p)
Norway						X
Russian Fed.				X	(p)	(p)
Switzerland				X	(p)	X
Turkey ²²	X*	X**	X***	X	X****	X****
Ukraine						(p)
US						(p)

Updated Stand: March 2008²³

²² X: agreement in force (p): agreement in preparation X* signed but not fully approved yet. X** Only institutional level MoU on Metrology field.; X*** There is an agreement but it is not such project level. X**** Agreement with FYugoslavia
²³ <http://www.see-science.eu>

5. Preventive research policy measures for integrating researchers in ERA

In chapter 3 and 4 the focus was laid on the main mobility obstacles faced by researchers in Europe. Chapter 5 gives an overview of the main topics and policy measures suggested in form of a “Mobility Strategy” to eliminate obstacles to mobility, implement suitable actions on national and European level and to encourage mobility in ERA.

5.1 The Mobility strategy for ERA

The major obstacles and hurdles to mobility were summarised in the final report of the High Level Group (HLG) as already dealt with in the previous chapter. The following step for the European Commission (EC) was to design a European Mobility Strategy for ERA in 2001. The Mobility Strategy is based on a close coordination process between the European Commission, the Member States, and the candidate countries.

The following overview summarises the main actions that were suggested in the “Mobility Strategy for ERA” in 2001²⁴.

Mobility Information Portal

In order to improve information on mobility to researchers and dissemination of vacancies the European Commission proposed to set up an internet portal linking national and EC internet sites by providing a common entry point for researchers to national and Community level information. This portal should function as a one-stop shop on mobility information. It includes information and advice on legal, administrative and cultural conditions in different countries and regulations related to mobility, such as bilateral tax and social security agreements, as well as on mobility opportunities, such as mobility programmes and vacancies for researchers.

Consequently, the European Commission also encouraged each Member State, to develop comprehensive national internet sites for EU and foreign researchers, with details on national regulations and procedures, providing practical information, and listing job vacancies and

²⁴ A Mobility Strategy for the European Research Area, COM(2001)331 Final

funding opportunities. This information was to be built up gradually, building on existing structures in many Member States.

Personal customised assistance

Easily available information about mobility to researchers should be combined with customised personal assistance to researchers from specialised institution(s), already existing ones or new structures, in each country. This customised assistance would foster in maintaining contacts with the researchers after they have left the country. Close connection with home institutions and laboratories is always crucial during a stay abroad.

The European Commission suggested the creation of Mobility Centres that shall assist national and foreign researchers in dealing with legal and administrative matters and provide training facilities to officials dealing with mobility, particularly within universities.

These Centres should not replace existing structures, but provide necessary means for a better co-operation and networking between existing and newly created structures.

Finally, the EC encouraged Member States, regions and other actors in the research area (academia, research centres etc.) to improve the international advertisement of research positions.

Networking activities

The European Commission (EC) should, in collaboration with the Member States set up a series of workshops on the exchange of best practice, on themes of common interest.

A constant dialogue within the Member States and within the EC at all levels is necessary in order to raise the visibility of the existing problems for mobile researchers. An active networking among the Member States on mobility should be provided.

The EC encouraged the organisation, within Member States, to hold inter-ministerial meetings on mobility about current obstacles of direct concern to the European Research Area. These meetings help to raise awareness about the necessity to develop integrated strategies for the mobility of researchers by liaising with appropriate structures at national or regional level. Based on the results of these meetings, the EC assists interested Member States in organising global high-level meetings on research at national level.

Funding

Financial incentives for mobility at local, regional, national or Community level, that are adapted to the different stages and forms of mobility and the characteristics of the countries and researchers concerned were suggested.

In defining these incentives, the EC pointed out the essentiality of the financial mechanisms to go beyond the financing of fellowships. They need to take systematically into consideration such issues as the return and re-integration of researchers to and within Europe, the situation of families and the financial compensation for obstacles linked to mobility issues.

The European Commission summarised the need of funding in the following way:

“Opening and broadening the existing instruments in order to encourage researchers to undertake mobility experiences throughout their professional career, notwithstanding their age, gender, experience or country of origin, with the objective of encouraging training in and for research, the transfer of knowledge, the networking of centres of excellence and the optimal use of research infrastructures of the highest level throughout the EU”²⁵.

A provision of more open and systematic access to funding for researchers from Third Countries, as well as for European researchers wishing to acquire an experience abroad was wished for.

Research Charter

The EC promised to prepare a 'quality charter' for the reception of foreign researchers. The charter guarantees a minimum level of assistance to foreign researchers from the institutions involved. This assistance includes support for integration into the working and social environment of the host country, including taxation and intellectual property rights. The objective is to encourage host organisations to take more responsibility for their foreign staff and visiting researchers (see chapter 6.3.1).

Family issues

Mobility usually does not only concern an individual researcher but a family unit, often coping with different obstacles concerning a move. In the cases of medium- to long-term mobility the issue of families and their integration has to be solved.

²⁵ A Mobility Strategy for ERA, COM(2001) 331 Final, page 12

Accreditation

Successful mobility periods ought to be considered at least as a favourable element for progress in research careers in public research institutions and recognition of diplomas, in particular PhD degrees should be guaranteed.

Legal improvements

The European Commission saw a need of some legal provisions for Third Country nationals being long term residents due to research in an EU Member State as well as a directive proposal for family reunification.

It investigated the possibility of scientific visa, which allows Third Country researchers to enter the EU more easily, especially when they are participating in public funded research. This allows free movement within the EU, once the foreign researcher is granted residence in a Member State (see chapter 6.1).

Social Security and Taxation

Hope for advancements in the coordination of social security and taxation was also communicated in the strategy. Some Member States stressed that taxation and social security lie within the competence of Member States. It was recognised that these aspects would require high political level agreement.

The European Commission encouraged Member States to continue to conclude bilateral social security agreements with non-EU states. Similarly, Member States will be encouraged to complete the network of bilateral tax agreements in order to include all countries participating in the Framework Programme.

6. Actions for implementation of the ERA Mobility Strategy in the years 2003-2007

Chapter 6 of the report is providing an overview of the operative measures and actions that the European Commission (EC) and the Member States have been conducting mutually in the years 2003-2007 to implement the Mobility Strategy for ERA and its suggested actions that were described in chapter 5. It also analyses the implementation level in WBC and the advantage/the use of these actions for the region.

6.1 Legal Improvements

6.1.1 The Scientific Visa

To implement the mobility strategy as a whole the EC also started to take appropriate measures in integrating researchers from Third Countries and facilitate their entry as researchers to the EU.

The EC though recognised that the main issues and problems for Third Countries (not belonging to EU) incoming and outgoing mobility are the visa and the working permits. Member States were to speed up their procedures concerning issuing and renewing visa and residence permits for researchers not stemming from EU. The aspect of families and the reunification was also seen as a very important one in the decision to choose mobility or not.

In order to achieve this enhancement the European Commission launched three new instruments in 2005. It was a “package” of a directive and 2 recommendations introducing the so called “scientific visa”.

It enables the creation of a specific residence permit for Third Country researchers, independent of their contractual status (employee, self-employed or stipendiary. This admission procedure doesn't depend on their legal relationship with the host research organisation and no longer requires a work permit in addition to a residence permit.

The long term and short term recommendations are also part of the scientific visa package.

6.1.1.1 The Directive

In October 2005 the European Commission launched a directive on a specific procedure for Third Country nationals for the purpose of scientific research (Council Directive 2005/71/EC)²⁶. The directive sets the conditions for the admission of Third Country researchers to the Member States for more than three months for the purpose of carrying out a research project under hosting agreements with Member States research organisations.

The hosting agreement

The hosting Member State research organisation (an accredited public or private research organisation) and the non EU researcher is signing a hosting agreement. The hosting agreement is certifying the status of the visiting researcher in that he is carrying out a valid research project during a certain period of time and that he has the scientific skills, the financial means and health insurance needed.

Once the hosting agreement has been signed and provided that the hosting researcher is fulfilling certain standard requirements like valid travel documents, no threat to public policy, security or health, the immigration authorities of the hosting country shall launch the residence permit in a short period of time.

The Member State issues a residence permit for a period of at least one year and it can be renewed. If the research project is scheduled to last less than one year, the residence permit ought to be issued for the duration of the project. Once a Member State grants a residence permit to the researcher, he or she will be free to move within all European Union Member States for the purpose of the scientific project.

Moreover, if a researcher wishes to extend his or her stay in another Member State it will no longer be necessary to return to the country of origin to submit an application.

Family members

When a Member State grants a residence permit to the researchers family members, the duration of their residence permit shall be the same as that of the of the researcher. Additionally the issue of the residence permit for the family members of the researcher shall not be dependent on the requirement of a minimum period of residence for the researcher in a Member State.

²⁶ Council Directive 2005/71/EC of 12 October 2005 on a specific procedure for admitting third-country nationals for the purposes of scientific research
Official Journal of the European Union L 289/15

6.1.1.2 The Recommendation on short term visas (09/2005)

To facilitate short term stays (less than 3 months) in an EU country for a Third Country researcher the European Parliament and the Council published the Recommendation 2005/761/EC on short term visas²⁷. This recommendation does not impose legal obligations on Member States. It can be defined as a political commitment to facilitate short-term stays connected with scientific research in an EU country (e.g. to attend conferences, seminars etc.). It recommends the Member States to rapidly deliver short-term visa, adopt a harmonised approach to visa applications, and to reinforce the consular co-operation.

This recommendation does not apply to the UK and Ireland. Denmark has to decide whether or not it will apply it. Although the new Member States will not apply this recommendation until their full participation in the Schengen area; in the meantime they could set up similar visa facilitations in their national law.

6.1.1.3 The Recommendation for Long Term Admission (10/2005)

Shortly after the recommendation on short term visas the recommendation 2005/762/EC on long-term admission²⁸ (more than 3 months) to facilitate the possibility for Third Country nationals to carry out scientific research in the European Union was published.

The recommendation does not impose legal obligations on Member States, it is rather a political commitment to support the implementation of the directive into national law.

Concerning the implementation of the directive by the Member States, the first recommendation on long term admission asks Member States to support and respect the objectives of the directive with reference in particular to the acceleration of the procedure to deliver work permits for researchers, and the easing up of the procedure for the residence permit.

The Recommendation on long-term admission applies to all EU countries, except United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark.

²⁷ Recommendation of the European parliament and of the council of September 28, 2005, (2005/761/EC) to facilitate the issue by the Member States of uniform short-stay visas for researchers from third countries travelling within the Community for the purpose of carrying out scientific research

²⁸ Council Recommendation of 12 October 2005 to facilitate the admission of third country nationals to carry out scientific research in the European Community (2005/762/EC)

6.1.2 The implementation of the three instruments

The Directive applies to all EU countries except the United Kingdom and Denmark. The "new Member States" will also apply the directive, apart from provisions concerning short term mobility to other EU countries (i.e. the rules on short-term visas could be different for the new MS until their full participation in the Schengen area, which might occur after the entry into force of the directive).

The importance of the directive was enhanced in that it should have been transposed into national law in the Member States by October 12, 2007.

The fact was that at that time point only six member states: Austria, Belgium, Germany, Hungary, Portugal and Romania had fully implemented the directive to national law. France, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia had notified the Commission to implement it only partly. In December 2007 additionally Ireland, Estonia and the Netherlands and Poland reported a status of full transposition to the European Commission²⁹.

France and Greece have set up legislation implementing the directive but need to implement provisions (e.g. governmental decrees, etc.); the other countries are drafting their new laws or amending the existing ones.

The two recommendations on admission and short-term visa have not had yet a significant impact on administrative procedures.

These delays can be seen as a weak commitment of the EU memberstates to set up necessary rules and attract third countries for research.

6.1.3 Advantages for the Western Balkan Countries

It is relevant to mention that this "scientific visa" is not connected to any specific mobility programmes like the FP7 or similar, meaning it is effective in all relations concerning research and applying to all Third Country researchers, in this sense meaning non-EU countries.

²⁹ <http://www.wbc-inco.net/news/2342.html>

The scientific visa gives a permission to enter, stay and work in a Member State for the purpose of carrying out scientific research. This legislative step shows a big effort to facilitate and improve the mobility environment for Third Country researchers. This directive and the recommendations are therefore very significant and useful for a Western Balkan researcher joining any kind of research activity in an EU country.

This directive has many added values for a researcher stemming from a Western Balkan country leaving for EU (incoming mobility).

- Researchers who are admitted as employees don't have to obtain work permits in the Member State and no country limitation is permitted.
- The family reunification is facilitated.
- The WBC researchers should be able to submit applications for residence permits directly to the authorities in the host Member State if they are legal residents in that country (without returning home first which has been the case in the past).
- The WBC researcher is able to carry out part of his/her research activities to other Member State countries for a period lasting less than 3 months (while today it is only possible to move, but not to work).
- When moving for a period of more than 3 months, the new host country could require the signature of another hosting agreement.
- The non-discrimination principle towards national researchers will concern inter alia working conditions to avoid social dumping (the foreign researcher should have comparable salary conditions as nationals), and social security. This would provide an attractive incentive for an incoming WBC researcher.

6.2 VISA Facilitation Agreements for WBC

In addition to the VISA facilitation that is directed especially to researchers, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, FYR of Macedonia and Montenegro and Serbia general visa facilitation agreements entered into force in January 2008³⁰. This can be seen as one step nearer to the European Union.

³⁰ http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en_GB/newsbriefs/setimes/newsbriefs/2008/01/02/nb-03

These agreements allow citizens of the Western Balkan countries such as students or businessmen to have easier access to entry visas for the EU through decrease of costs, shortening of the application period and the possibility for longer-period visas. These WBC also signed re-admission agreements, which allow the EU to send back illegally residing persons from those countries.

The agreement will be applied in all EU member states except Denmark and the UK. It will also cover the nine new Schengen members -- the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.

The visa facilitation should encourage the Western Balkan countries to tackle problems which are still pending in areas such as rule of law, the fight against organised crime and corruption, and the strengthening of the administrative capacity in border control and security of documents.

6.3 Policy Actions for recognising researchers and their working environment

During 2005 the EC launched a new set of principles and requirements on how researchers should be treated and what rights and obligations they have in their own field. These are summarised as the European Charter for Researcher and the Code of Conduct on recruitment for researchers³¹. These two important documents should contribute in making research a popular career choice.

Both principles and regulations are addressed to researchers as well as to employers, from private and public sectors. They offer the researchers the same right and obligations independent of in which EU Member State country they are working in or what nationality they are. These principles also show the responsibilities and roles of their employers and funders.

³¹ <http://www.europa.eu.int/eracareers/europeancharter>

6.3.1 The European Charter for Researcher

The European Charter for Researchers is focusing on the roles and responsibilities of researchers as well as of their employers and/or funders. Part of the Charter deals with principles and requirements directed to the researcher and part with regulations directed to their employers and funders.

The charter is dealing with e.g. the following issues:

Researcher freedom, ethical principles, professional responsibilities and attitude, contractual/legal obligations, accountability, good practices, public relations, dissemination and exploitation, professional careers.

The charter also recognizes the value of all forms of mobility as a means for enhancing the professional development of researchers.

6.3.2 The Code of conduct for the recruitment of researchers

The Code of Conduct for the recruitment of researchers is emphasizing the importance of a fair recruitment process and environment. It consists of a set of general principles and requirements that should be followed by employers and/or funders when appointing or recruiting researchers.

These principles and requirements should assure a certain recruiting environment, a transparency of the recruitment process and equal treatment of all applicants with regard to open and attractive European labour market for researchers and they are complementary to those outlined in the European Charter for Researchers.

Institutions and employers committed to the Code of Conduct have to act in a responsible and respectable way and to provide fair framework conditions to researchers, with intention to contribute to the advancement of the European Research Area.

6.3.3 Implementation and use of the Charter and Code

The Charter and Code are signed at institutional level and not as a state agreement. Both documents are implemented on a voluntary basis. Public and private organisations from the following countries have signed the Charter and Code: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovak republic, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and The Netherlands.

There are furthermore a few open discussion points concerning the Charter and the Code. What kind of impact do these principles have on the daily life of a researcher? Should the Charter and Code be made mandatory? The implementation looks very differently at university and industry level. The implementation is still quite slow and there is still a lot to do in terms of awareness rising among researchers and institutions/countries who haven't signed it.

The EC/DG Research has launched an opinion survey³² about the implementation and awareness level of the Charter and the Code. It is published as an online survey for all active researchers in EU. This evaluation survey will be a good basis for further actions.

6.3.4 Implementation and use in Western Balkan

The research institutions in WBC have neither signed the Charter nor the Code. The University of Zagreb in Croatia has launched an own Code of Ethical Conduct which has a similar content and background. It is in the adoption phase at the moment³³. Although no WBC country has yet signed them, they are generally recognised and accepted as existing European norms on researchers. It remains to say that the individual commitment of the institutions is still lacking.

It is important to emphasize especially for those countries who haven't signed these two recommendations yet, that they are no legally binding documents but expressions of acceptance on researchers' rights and obligations. Institutions who signed them make a

³² <http://infopoll.net/live/surveys/s31098.htm> (Status: August 2007)

³³ <http://webmob.masfak.ni.ac.yu/sitegenius/article.php?aid=400> (Status: July 2007)

good front face of implementing good practices towards researchers. This could help weaker and not very well known research institutions in WBC to attract foreign researchers.

6.4 Mobility funding through the EU Framework Programme

6.4.1 The 6th Framework Programme (FP6) and Mobility

The 6th Framework Programme (FP6)³⁴ was the main instrument of the European Union between 2002 and 2006 to realise the aims of the ERA. In order to encourage the mobility of researchers from EU Member States to non EU Member States, and vice versa, financial schemes focussing on international mobility for individual researchers and for research organisations were set up in FP6.

The Western Balkan countries (WBC) have generally been quite weak in participating in the 6th Framework Programme (FP6) with only around 200 participations in projects from the whole region in total. The INCO (International Cooperation programme) has been the most attractive programme, with almost 60% of all projects stemming from this category³⁵.

Under the FP6 Marie Curie scheme³⁶ the relevance of international mobility has been recognised and implemented in the international mobility actions in order to encourage the mobility of researchers from Europe to the rest of the world and vice versa. Main goals behind this issue were to increase the quality of research in Europe by attracting talented researchers from other parts of the world, to improve the quality of skill development for European researchers and to strengthen research collaboration between researchers and research institutions in Europe and other parts of the world.

Several financial schemes focussing on international mobility were included in FP6. Depending on who is taking the initiative, mobility actions can either be initiated by an individual researcher (in cooperation with a host institution) or by a research organisation:

³⁴ <http://cordis.europa.eu/fp6/whatisfp6.htm>

³⁵ Gajdusek M.F., Mayr A.C., Polzer M. (2006) Science Policy and Human Resources Development in South-Eastern Europe in the Context of European Integration

³⁶ http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/people/home_en.html

Host-driven Marie Curie actions, such as Research Training Networks, Host Fellowships for Early Stage Research Training, Host Fellowships for the Transfer of Knowledge, Scientific Conferences and Training Courses, and Grants for Excellence Teams and Chairs, are open to Third Country nationals, including since FP6 the possibility for the host to recruit nationals from Third Countries for up to 30% of all fellow-months³⁷.

Individual-driven Marie Curie actions, such as International Incoming Fellowships, International Outgoing Fellowships and International Reintegration Grants, turned out to be more attractive and very often more straightforward for researchers than host-driven mobility actions:

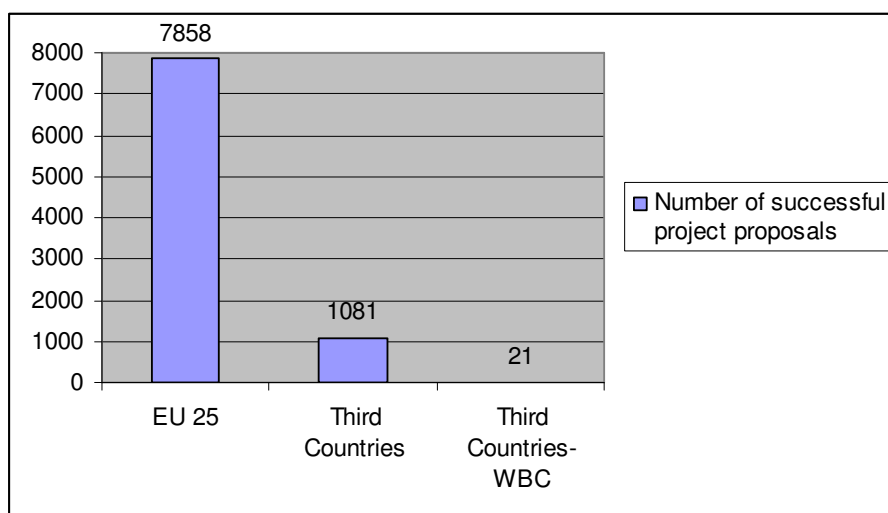
- International Incoming Fellowships (IIF) provided under FP6 the possibility for experienced researchers to be hosted under an individual fellowship within a European research organisation for the purpose of advanced training. A reintegration in the home country after the completion of the fellowship was also possible (if the fellow originated from a developing country or an emerging or transition economy).
- International Outgoing Fellowships (OIF) for the training of advanced researchers in Third Countries were providing the possibility for European researchers to apply for a training period of up to two years in an institution of their choice in a Third Country, followed by a mandatory return period to a European institution.
- The International Reintegration Grants (IRG) were created under FP6 in order to encourage European researchers who have been working outside Europe for at least five years to return to Europe to share their knowledge and expertise.

Mobility of researchers from Western Balkan Countries (WBC) in FP6

PROVISO³⁸ data on the activity area of human resources and mobility obtained for FP6 (2002-2006) are based on approximately 60% of all successful/funded project proposals: Concerning participation of Third Countries in the FP6 Marie Curie programme the ratio of successful project proposals between EU 25 and Third Countries was 7:1.

³⁷ The international dimension of Marie Curie Actions in FP7 (2004)

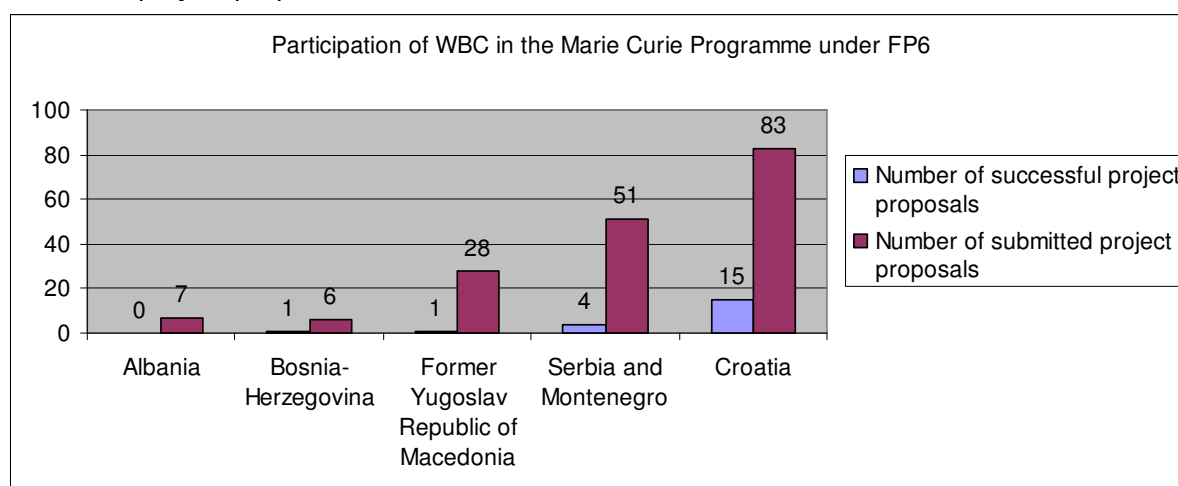
³⁸ PROVISO is a project funded by Austrian Federal ministries with research responsibilities, providing updated monitoring of participation in the EU Framework Programmes for Research and Technological Development and assistance to Austrian ministries and delegates involved in research policy at national, European and international level
http://archiv.bmbwk.gv.at/europa/rp/proviso/project_en.xml



Source: PROVISIO 2007, Data status: September 2006

The participation of Western Balkan Countries (WBC) in the Marie Curie programme under FP6 was rather weak (Status: September 2006):

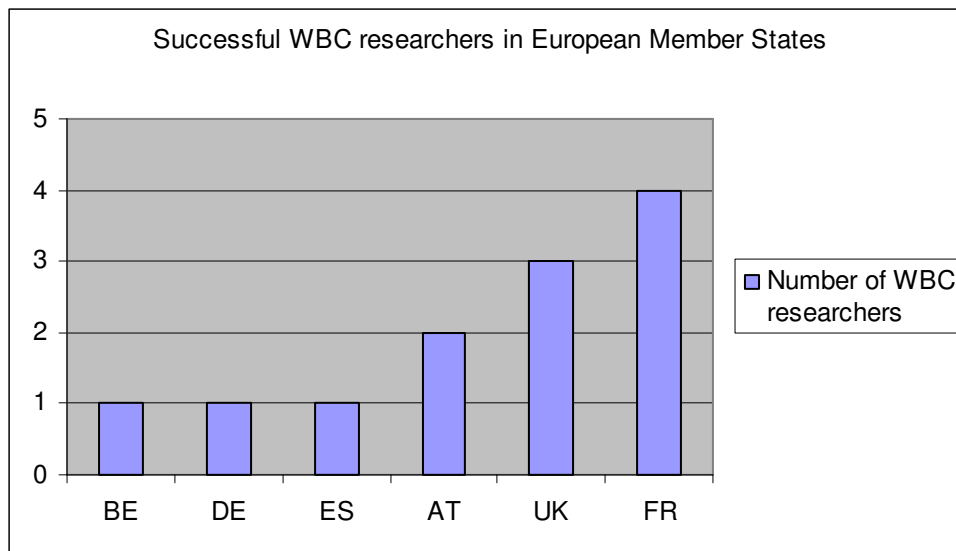
175 project proposals have been submitted in WBC, with 21 project proposals being successful. 15 successful project proposals come from Croatia alone, whereas in Albania no project proposal was successful. Croatia, with an 18% success rate, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, with round 17%, are among the most successful WBC related to the number of submitted project proposals.



Source: PROVISIO 2007, Data status: September 2006

3 of the 21 successful projects were targeted towards a specific Marie Curie instrument (for excellence promotion and recognition), 6 participations were Marie Curie host driven actions, whereas 12 participations were individual driven.

The 12 individual driven mobility actions were all targeted towards EU Member States, i.e. Austria (2), Belgium (1), France (4), Germany (1), United Kingdom (3) and Spain (1).



Source: PROVISO 2007, Data status quo: September 2006

None of the successful projects was targeted by a European researcher for training in a Third Country (incl. WBC).

Conclusion

It is obvious that participation of researchers from WBC in Marie Curie Actions was low in FP6 compared to EU25 participation (Status: September 2006).

Nevertheless, compared to other Third Countries (excluding Australia, Canada, China, India, Japan, Russia and the United States of America), an average of 15 successful project submissions per Third Country was the outcome in FP6, a result with which Croatia is perfectly able to compete.

Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia were more active in submitting mobility proposals compared to Bosnia-Herzegovina and Albania. It remains to say that FP7 will be a good platform and period for Bosnia-Herzegovina to intensify efforts and a good new opportunity for Albania to overcome isolation and for Albanian researchers to become mobile within Europe.

6.4.2. The status of the Western Balkan Countries (WBC) in FP7

The status of the Western Balkan Countries (WBC) has changed since the start of ERA in the year 2000. In the years 2000-2005 all WBC had the status of a Third Country.

In 2006 Croatia was the first WBC to become an Associate Country for the last year of FP6.

On June 13, 2007 Croatia, Serbia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia signed the Memoranda of Understanding³⁹, contributing to the Framework Programme budget. These three WBC are associated to FP7 and can participate in the Specific Programme People and all other Specific Programmes in FP7 under the same conditions as all EU Member States (MS) or Associated Countries.

Albania signed the Memoranda of Understanding on the 17th of December 2007. The new associated status allows Albania to participate in all calls for proposals as of 1 January 2008⁴⁰.

Montenegro has now also signed the MoU on the 25th of January 2008⁴¹.

Consequently this means that all countries of the Western Balkans except Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) are associated to the European Union 7th FP on an equal base with the EU Member states.

Bosnia-Herzegovina is still being funded as International Cooperation Partner Countries (ICPC) under slightly modified conditions, e.g. after minimum participation conditions are met⁴².

³⁹ftp://ftp.cordis.europa.eu/pub/fp7/docs/third_country_agreements_en.pdf

⁴⁰http://cordis.europa.eu/fetch?CALLER=FP7_NEWS&ACTION=D&DOC=1&CAT=NEWS&QUERY=1198140446892&RCN=28871

⁴¹http://cordis.europa.eu/fetch?CALLER=FP7_NEWS&ACTION=D&DOC=6&CAT=NEWS&QUERY=1202367929157&RCN=29058

⁴²EC Rules for participation http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/find-doc_en.html

6.4.3 The 7th Framework Programme (FP7) and Mobility

The approach on international cooperation under FP7 aims at integrating international research collaboration throughout the Framework Programme, including both geographical and thematic targeting.

FP7 includes a broad opening of international research collaboration in programmes and in research themes across the whole Framework Programme and a programming of specific priorities for Third Countries and regions. It is defining specific actions for collaboration with Third Countries and regions in its thematic programmes. New focus are Specific International Cooperation Actions (SICA)⁴³ for Third Countries and regions under FP7, aiming at a fair level of participation for Third Countries in the collaboration with their European partners. To maximise impact, the international activities across all programmes will be complementary and synergistic.

Under FP6 the 'Marie Curie Actions' were part of the Specific Programme dedicated to structure the European Research Area (ERA).

In FP7 the Marie Curie Actions have been regrouped and strengthened within Specific Programme People, entirely dedicated to human resources and mobility in research. The Specific Programme People (2007-2013), has an overall budget of more than €4.7 billion representing a 50% rise on average compared to FP6⁴⁴.

Two main differences to FP6, despite the significant increase in budget, are that funding of conferences and chairs is only possible in the frame of the Initial Training Networks (ITN) and Industry Academia Partnerships and Pathways (IAPP) and not in a separate mobility action any more, and that funding of excellent teams is excluded and implemented in the Specific Programme "IDEAS"⁴⁵.

The international dimension, as basic component of human resources in research and development in Europe, is reflected in the way that the Marie Curie Actions are open to Third Country researchers. Legal entities established in an International Co-operation Partner

⁴³ Commission staff working document: "A new approach to international scientific and technological co-operation in the 7th Research Framework Programme (2007-2013) and 7th Framework Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) (2007-2011)": SEC(2007)47 of 12.01.2007

⁴⁴ http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/people/home_en.html

⁴⁵ http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ideas/home_en.html

Country (ICPC)⁴⁶ and international European interest organisations may participate in these actions on an equal basis with those from Member States (MS) and Associated Countries (AC) and may receive a Community financial contribution. Participants from other Third Countries may receive a Community financial contribution only if their participation is essential for carrying out the project.

The following host-driven and individual-driven Marie Curie Actions are open for Third Country researchers:

Initial Training Networks (ITN)

The host-driven Initial Training Networks (ITN) are supporting selected networks of organisations from different countries engaged within research training. Built on a joint research training programme ITN shall take action at well identified training needs.

Third Country organisations can participate once minimum requirements are fulfilled (three independent participants from three different MS or AC), Third country researchers can apply for an appointment in a running ITN, or can be recruited as Visiting Scientists in a running ITN.

Industry Academia Partnerships and Pathways (IAPP)

The host-driven Industry Academia Partnerships and Pathways aim at promoting dynamic pathways between public research organisations and private commercial enterprises, especially Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Support is provided for targeted human resources interaction (mutual intersectoral staff secondments) and longer-term cooperation programmes, aimed at knowledge sharing and inter-sector mobility.

Third Country organisations can participate once minimum requirements are fulfilled (two participants from MS or AC, at least one from the public sector and one from the private sector), Third country researchers can participate in the staff secondment (if they have been employed in the organisation for at least one year) or can be recruited as experienced external researchers.

Intra European Fellowships for Career Development (IEF)

Individual-driven Intra European Fellowships for Career Development support the career development of experienced researchers at different stages of their careers.

⁴⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/research/iscp/pdf/icpc_countries_en.pdf

Support is provided for advanced training and trans-national mobility for individual projects by experienced researchers from MS or AC together with a host organisation from another MS or AC (for a period of 12 to 24 months).

Third Country researchers can participate if they have resided in a MS or AC for at least 3 out of the last 4 years (at the proposal submission deadline).

International Outgoing Fellowships for Career Development (IOF)

The individual-driven International Outgoing Fellowship for Career Development (IOF) supports the career of experienced European researchers by giving them the opportunity to be trained and acquire new knowledge in a Third Country and return with the acquired knowledge and experience to an organisation in a MS or AC.

The partner organisation (outgoing host) has to be located in a Third Country, but researchers from Third Countries are not eligible.

International Incoming Fellowships (IIF)

Individual-driven International Incoming Fellowships aim at strengthening the scientific excellence of MS and AC through knowledge sharing with incoming experienced researchers from Third Countries. Support is provided for research projects in Europe, with the view to developing mutually-beneficial research co-operation between Europe and Third Countries.

Researchers must be nationals of a Third Country and must not have resided in a MS or AC for more than 3 years in the last 4 years (at the proposal submission deadline).

If the researcher originates from an International Cooperation Partner Country (ICPC), the scheme may support researchers to return to their country of origin provided that there is a mutual interest between the MS or AC and the Third Countries concerned.

European Reintegration Grants (ERG)

The individual-driven European Reintegration Grants support experienced researchers in the (re)integration into a research career, after a trans-national mobility experience within a 'Marie Curie Action'.

Third Country researchers can participate if they have resided in a MS or AC for at least three out of the last four years (at the relevant cut-off date).

The International Research Staff Exchange Scheme (IRSES)

A new Marie Curie action was implemented in FP7, the Marie Curie International Research Staff Exchange Scheme (IRSES). This host-driven action aims at strengthening research partnerships through short period staff exchanges and networking activities between research organisations in Member States and Associated Countries and organisations from countries with which the Community has an S&T-agreement or are in the process of negotiating one, and countries covered by the European Neighbourhood policy.

Third Countries eligible for IRSES:

1. *Countries with an S&T agreement with the EC*

Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Chile, Egypt, India, Japan⁴⁷, (Rep. of) Korea, Mexico, Morocco, New Zealand, Russia, South Africa, Tunisia, Ukraine, Unites States

2. *Countries covered by the European Neighbourhood Policy (but which are not Associated countries for the purpose of FP7)*

Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, Palestinian-administrated areas, Syrian Arab Rep., Tunisia, Ukraine

Minimum requirements are at least two independent host organisations (universities, research organisations, etc.) established in at least two different EU Member States (MS) or Associated countries (AC), and one or more organisation(s) located either in countries with which the EU has an S&T Agreement or in countries covered by the European Neighbourhood Policy.

A staff exchange programme can apply for Community support for a period of 24-48 months. The maximum duration of the individual staff exchanges will be 12 months.

It is expected that the exchanges out of Europe are roughly in balance with those into Europe (in terms of person months). For staff from EU Member States or Associated countries, the mobility must be towards the Third Country partners and vice-versa. Early stage and experienced researchers, as well as technical and managerial staff can benefit from the exchange programme. Partner organisations from eligible Third countries are supposed to cover themselves the costs for their "outgoing" staff.

⁴⁷ Currently in the process of negotiating an S&T cooperation agreement with the European Community

6.5 Mobility Portals: one stop-shops for Mobility

6.5.1 The European Researchers Mobility Portal

Web: <http://ec.europa.eu/eracareers>

The European Mobility Portal ERA CAREERS, was established in 2003. As already mentioned this mobility portal responds to a specific need, highlighted by the High Level Group on Mobility, to significantly improve the access of researchers to adequate information on available programmes and opportunities as well as on questions related to entry conditions, access to employment, social security rights, taxation or cultural aspects of the host country.

The European Commission (EC) devoted specific attention to this initiative in its Mobility Strategy in 2001 (see chapter 5.1).

The portal is a shared initiative between the EC and the participating countries and is complemented by a number of national portals.

As of today, the ERA Careers portal offers three main types of information: research vacancies, grant and fellowships and a section of practical information. There are search functions for these three categories according to country, organisation and research field. The practical information part includes accession to the ERA MORE network site and to the national mobility portals. Besides that the portal also offers the researcher the possibility to post his/her career CV as an important service.

ERA Careers provides researchers with around 4,000 external links. About 800 job vacancies are daily on view and there is a constant increase in the number of researchers, who are using the portal for activities like posting the CV, free of charge. Currently it contains around 7,000 CVs. The number of page views per month is also constantly increasing, the average being about 220,000 per month. All the links and all the data is continuously checked to secure a high quality⁴⁸.

⁴⁸ Commission Staff Working Document, Mobility of Researchers and Career Development: Implementation Report 2006

An electronic newsletter called "Europe4Researchers" is also available on the portal and keeps researchers, research institutions, universities and industry up to date on the latest news and developments in the mobility area.

6.5.2 National Mobility Portals

In order to promote the pan-European portal ERA Careers as a shared initiative between the Commission and the participating countries, the Commission also wanted to have national mobility portals, which reflect and build on the content and functionalities offered by the European tool. The main objective is to reach a consensus regarding the interoperability of the different web sources, promoting important information to researchers at national or European level.

The national portals form an integral part of the European portal and the development of national mobility portals has been accepted as a priority action by most of the participating countries. The majority are using a common corporate identity to the European portal including: URL (mentioning "eracareers"), structure and content; others, however, have opted for a lower level of interoperability (e.g. Ireland, Denmark, and Turkey).

The national portals function like one-stop shops for researchers who need advice about the country and its specifics, when they plan a research career abroad.

The national portals inform about the research system in the country, the living and working conditions, job vacancies as well as available grants and fellowships. Therefore a constant need to monitor and maintain the quality of the content provided exists.

The data on the national portals are updated and maintained by the national mobility centres and many of these sites were set up as an important work output of the ERA-MORE network. (See chapter 6.6).

31 national portals are placed at disposal (Status: January 2008):

Web-links to the National Portals

Austria	http://www.researchinaustria.info
Belgium	http://www.eracareers-belgium.be
Bulgaria	http://www.eracareers-bg.net
Cyprus	http://www.eracareers.org.cy
Czech Republic	http://www.eracareers.cz
Denmark	http://www.workindenmark.dk
Estonia	http://www.smartestonia.ee
Finland	http://www.aka.fi
France	http://www.eracareers.fr
Germany	http://www.eracareers-germany.de/en/index.htm
Greece	http://mobility.certh.gr
Hungary	http://eracareers-hungary.tpf.hu
Iceland	http://www.eracareers.is
Ireland	http://www.researchcareersireland.com
Israel	http://eracareers.most.gov.il
Italy	http://www.fondazionecru.it/eracareers
Latvia	http://www.eracareers.lv
Lithuania	http://www.eracareers.lt/en
Malta	http://www.eracareers.org.mt
The Netherlands	http://www.eracareers.nl
Norway	http://www.eracareers.no
Poland	http://www.eracareers-poland.gov.pl
Portugal	http://www.eracareers.pt
Romania	http://www.eracareers.ro
Slovakia	http://www.eracareers.sk/version_eng/index_en.php
Slovenia	http://www.eracareers.si/index.php?home=1
Spain	http://www.eracareers.es/fecyt/index_en.jsp
Sweden	http://www.eracareers.se
Switzerland	http://www.sbf.admin.ch/eracareers
Turkey	http://www.fp7.org.tr/MainPage/tabid/1296/Default.aspx
United Kingdom	http://www.eracareers-uk.info

6.6 International Mobility Networks: linking mobile researchers

6.6.1 The European Network of Mobility Centres: ERA-MORE

In addition to the pan European ERA careers portal, the creation of a network of Mobility Centres was established to address the need to provide customised personal assistance to researchers and their families in all matters relating to their mobility experience in another participating country. These mobility centres are acting as open doors for researchers who are looking for practical guidance. The researcher finds his/her answer either directly at the specific mobility centre or he/she is redirected to an appropriate specialised centre.

The European Network of Mobility Centres is called the ERA-MORE network (European Research Area – Mobile Researchers). The mobility centres are open to incoming, outgoing and returning researchers, independent of their nationality and contractual situation.

The network was officially launched in Paris, on the occasion of an international mobility conference in 2004. In 2005 the first 28 Mobility Centres signed the declaration of commitment and became operational.

The network, now consisting of around 200 centres throughout Europe, is offering all researchers a practical and harmonised instrument to make it easier to prepare their mobility experience and facilitate their installation in their host country. Currently 31 European Countries are members of the network. There are still no Western Balkan Countries integrated but there are already actions taken to include them in the near future (see chapter 6.6.2) The European Commission wants to achieve a coherent European level of the network especially concerning the aspect that many of the centres have different structures in different countries.

There are three different types of structures in the setting up a mobility centre:

- Creating one Mobility Centre as a single entry point, backed up where necessary by a national mobility network (Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Iceland, Lithuania, Latvia, Malta, Norway, Romania, Sweden, Turkey, United Kingdom)
- Creating several Mobility Centres, each complemented by a network of national or regional correspondents (Austria, France, Hungary, Italy, Slovakia)

- Creating several decentralised Mobility Centres as a network at national level (Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, Israel, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain)

Mobility centres are in many cases research promotion agencies (Austria) or innovation agencies (Italy) or centres for research and technology. Some countries established several mobility centres, one in each region and in this case the universities play an essential role. Countries like Hungary, Greece and Portugal provide several regional mobility centres.

In addition to the mobility centres so called national bridgehead organisations (appointed by the Research Ministries), are serving as links between the Commission on the one hand and organisations at local, regional and national levels, on the other, coordinating essential activities of the network.

The Bridgehead organisations and the mobility centers with their different structures and types of organisations constitute the ERA-MORE network.

The European Commission is annually organising several networking activities like annual conferences for all members, regular bridgehead meetings, training sessions, working groups and workshops among the ERA-MORE network members.

Challenges for the ERA MORE network

The ERA-MORE network can still be described as a dynamic work. The main challenge seen is in fact, assured sustainability of the network as the problem of financing occurs.

The European Commission was co-financing the starting phase of the network but now it continues with a process of national funding and integration. It is a challenge for the ERA-MORE member states to keep up the budget on a national level. Additionally the promotion activities have to be forced and the visibility supported. The national mobility centres need backup from policy makers at a national, regional and local level.

In addition the Specific Programme People in FP7 has put a focus on strengthening ERA-MORE. A special call with the topic “Transnational collaboration among ERA-MORE members” was published in 2007 (deadline for application submission was end of August 2007)⁴⁹.

⁴⁹ Specific Programme People, Work programme 2007-2008, page 31(PEOPLE 2007-5-3-ERA-MORE)

The aim of this call is to enhance the overall performance of the ERA-MORE network and to stimulate trans-national cooperation between ERA-MORE members on operational and strategic issues.

The action is focusing on sharing good practices, on improving the overall coherence and quality of the services offered by the network as well as on developing common tools for the further operation of the ERA-MORE network.

Projects should present the different competences of the Mobility Centres and must have an exploitation potential for the whole network. Activities can include for instance studies, surveys, working groups, pilot projects and staff exchange. Special attention will be given to support less experienced Mobility Centres to rapidly acquire the know-how within the network.

The submission of proposals is restricted to members of the ERA-MORE network (committed by the signature of the "Declaration of commitment"). The consortia can include experts in the field that are not network members.

Parallel to the call the European Commission has dedicated some specific support actions to further strengthen and promote ERA-MORE⁵⁰. Under this category activities to set up a communication strategy are foreseen. It includes a new design of the corporate identity as well as promotion of the network.

Furthermore some annual conferences, extranet maintenance, content checks, workshops and trainings are foreseen to be financed under the same category of specific support actions.

6.6.2 Integrating Western Balkan into ERA MORE: A challenge for the future

None of the Western Balkan Countries (WBC) are yet full members of the ERA-MORE network. They do have Mobility National Contact Points (NCPs) for the 7th Framework Programme (FP7) but no mobility centres or national mobility portals yet. Until now the WBC:s have though been taking part in the ERA-MORE meetings and still in 2008 they should be ready to open up national portals and mobility centers.

⁵⁰ The specific actions are not subject to open calls for proposals, People Work programme 2007-2008, page 33

The further integration into the ERA-MORE Network is an essential point for more trust and integrity towards outgoing mobility to the Western Balkan region. After the WBC are fully integrated in the mobility network also the attractiveness for a researcher from a Member State to spend a few months in the WBC can be reflected.

The ministries in Croatia, Serbia and FYROM have also now nominated Bridgehead Organisations that constitutes a part of the ERA-MORE network that will be extended to the Western Balkan region. The associated status in the Seventh Framework Programme that has been achieved among all WBC, do contribute to a faster integration process.

Furthermore to speed up the process of integrating e.g the Western Balkan Countries into ERA MORE, a special grant from the European Commission was reserved for this purpose.

The European Commission is supporting the geographical enlargement of the ERA-MORE network in form of a grant. This grant is running for a maximum duration of three years and it may be awarded to the ministries officially responsible for research (or legal entities officially designated by them) in the cases of Croatia, Luxembourg, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Switzerland ⁵¹.

The European Commission is contributing to the start-up phase for setting up mobility centres at national level with these identified beneficiaries, reserving a total indicative budget of € 1,000,000.

Still in 2008, 3 new ERA-MORE agreements with WBC are targeted to be signed which obviously is a very big step towards full integration into the network.

6.6.3 WEB-MOB: A special mobility project for Western Balkan

WEB-MOB: Development of researchers' mobility policy guidelines for the region of Western Balkans

Web Address: <http://webmob.masfak.ni.ac.yu>

⁵¹ People Work programme 2007-2008, page 33

The WEB-MOB project was financed under the International Cooperation (INCO) programme of FP6. It started in 2005 and ended in August 2007. The consortium was composed of CERTH from Greece, as coordinator, and several academic participants representing all countries from the Western Balkan.

The project identifies the existing obstacles for outgoing mobility in WBC. Special mobility guidelines have been adopted for all Western Balkan countries giving a short overview of the country, the education system, living conditions, moving and working conditions and social issues. Also the situation for a researcher is explained regarding career opportunities and funding. These guidelines should support in preventing the brain-drain of researchers and generally support the research policy of the WBC in the area, in terms of strategic planning for an area of free mobility of researchers.

Another objective is to create synergies in close cooperation and complementary to the ERAMORE Network, in terms to keep researchers in their region or to direct them within Europe, fostering the realization of the European Research Area in the region.

Additionally the project has been carrying out a mapping exercise to identify the national web links from the WBC which could be useful for the European Mobility Portal, and all the main stakeholders (research organizations, industry, and ministries or administrative services) involved with researchers mobility.

This project can be considered as the first one dealing with mobility issues in the Western Balkan region and maintaining a very operative view.

6.6.4 Mobility in the FP7 Capacities Programme “Research Potential”

The FP7 Capacities Programme is operating in several areas, amongst others in the area “Research potential of convergence regions”⁵².

In order to support the full research potential of the enlarged European Research Area (ERA), this action shall strengthen the potential of research groups in convergence regions and outermost regions of the EU, since these regions are currently not using their full

⁵² http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/capacities/convergence-regions_en.html

research potential or are in need of new knowledge and support to realise their potential⁵³. In 2007 a special call under “Research potential of convergence regions” was dedicated to the Western Balkan Countries (WBC) with an indicative budget of 8M €⁵⁴, which was very well received by the WBC, showing remarkable oversubscription.

The aim was to support active participation of WBC in FP7 and to favour mobility through trans-national two-way exchanges of research staff between research centres established in the EU, EU convergence and outermost regions and in the WBC.

The new associated (to FP7) countries (AC), i.e. Croatia, FYR of Macedonia, Serbia, Albania and Montenegro are currently in the process of defining their convergence regions in order to be eligible for funding within further Calls in the FP7 Capacities Programme “Research potential of convergence regions”.

⁵³ ftp://ftp.cordis.europa.eu/pub/focus/docs/supplement-respot-insert01_en.pdf

⁵⁴ http://rp7.ffg.at/upload/medialibrary/FORSCHUNGSPOTENZIAL_wp_200701_en.pdf

7. Short Overview of other programmes that cover Mobility for researchers

COST (European Cooperation in the field of Scientific and Technical Research)

COST is one of the largest intergovernmental frameworks for the coordination of national-funded basic research at European level. Cooperation takes the form of research networks (Actions) between research institutions from member countries or cooperating states.

Croatia, FYR of Macedonia and Serbia have full access to COST. COST can though fund researchers from Albania, BiH and Montenegro who wants to participate in COST meetings.

COST is funding individual researchers travel expenses, workshops, conferences, action grants etc.

More information on COST can be found at: <http://www.cost.esf.org>

SEE ERA NET

The SEE-ERA.NET initiative is a European Commission's networking project for the integration of the Southeast European countries into the European Research Area through the opening of bilateral programmes. It is a network of ministries and agencies in 14 European countries that includes all Western Balkan countries and works directly on the level of policy makers.

It contributes to the enhancement of S&T cooperation with the Western Balkan countries; to facilitate their participation in project consortiums under the multilateral programs, such as FP7 and COST and to foster individual mobility of young scientist of the region.

The individual projects are financed under joint calls. The first call for project proposals is planned for spring 2009.

More information on SEE ERA NET can be found at: <http://see-era.net>

TEMPUS

The Tempus programme funds cooperation projects in the areas of curriculum development and innovation, teacher training, university management, and structural reforms in higher education. It gives special attention to the mobility of academic and administrative staff from higher education institutions, both from the EU and the partner countries. The TEMPUS programme is running between 2007-2013 and all Western Balkan countries are eligible to participate in TEMPUS activities.

More information at: http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/tempus/index_en.html

Life Long Learning Programme

The new Lifelong Learning Programme that runs between 2007-2013 replaces the Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci, and eLearning programmes that expired at the end of 2006.

The aim of the programme is to contribute through lifelong learning to the development of the Community as an advanced knowledge society by fostering interaction, cooperation and mobility between education and training systems within the Community. All WBC are eligible to participate in the Life Long Learning Programme.

More information at: http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/newprog/index_en.html

ERASMUS MUNDUS

The main purposes of the programme are enhancing the attractiveness and visibility of European higher education worldwide and promoting mobility between Europe and third countries.

The current Erasmus Mundus programme (2004-2008) ends in 2008 and the second phase of the programme starts in 2009, continuing until 2013.

All WBCs (except FYROM) are considered as “third countries” and therefore are eligible to participate in the actions.

More information at: http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/mundus/index_en.html

CEEPUS Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies

The main activity of CEEPUS are university networks operating joint programs ideally leading to joint degrees. CEEPUS covers mobility grants for students and teachers in this framework. The CEEPUS Programme covers 14 member countries including all WBC and additionally Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Romania, Slovak republic and Slovenia. All member countries have national CEEPUS offices that are in charge of the national imlementation. The legal basis for CEEPUS is an international Agreement signed by the member states and is open for accession.

More information at: <http://www.ceepus.info/default.aspx>

8. Conclusions

In order to reach full integration of WBC into the ERA there is still a lot of work to be done concerning mobility and knowledge exchange between the Western Balkan and the EU Member States. Some conclusions can be made and a few questions are legitimate to be asked.

Regarding **outgoing mobility**:

Institutional attractiveness is very essential for scientists to choose a career or visit abroad. With this aspect in mind the Western Balkan institutions could still make more promotion, publish vacancies internationally and make efforts to make their institutions more known.

The research focus in WBC clearly lies at the universities and therefore reforms and modernisation in the whole education system trough e.g. the Bologna Process are vital. A lot of exchange already takes place at student and academic level trough different exchange programmes like CEEPUS, TEMPUS, COST and Life Long Learning. This cooperation may gradually be shifted towards more indeep research cooperation.

There are some good universities (e.g. in Belgrade and Sarajevo) with high standing physicists and engineers in the region, but still a modernisation and opening up of the universities is needed to make a researcher visit in the Western Balkan region attractive.

Could some individual Western Balkan universities sign the Charter and Code to show that they implement good practices towards foreign researchers and hence contribute to more outgoing mobility?



The European Commission has now given all Western Balkan countries (except Bosnia-Herzegovina) a new status, developing from Third Countries to Associated Countries in the Seventh EU Framework Programme. This improvement shows the rest of Europe that the Western Balkan region ought to be integrated, such as e.g. the new Member States Bulgaria and Romania, and be seen as equal project partners to the Member States.

Will the Associated Country status in FP7 help to increase individual mobility exchange to WBC within the Specific Programme People or will the cooperation only increase through international consortia dealing with joint research?



The Western Balkan region will not be left out as a white spot on the ERA-MORE network map. The achieved associated status in FP7 speeds up the integration process. As we can see, the European Commission now wants to ascertain a place in the network for the first three countries: Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Serbia. Until end of 2008 these agreements are planned to be completed. Consequently mobility centers and national portals will be opened.

Will outgoing mobility to WBC increase once they join the ERA-MORE Network and operative mobility centres are established, guidelines for living and working conditions are provided and own national portals are available? Or is the right moment first when the WBC enter the European Union and gain membership?



It became clear that a few factors affect the decision on which target country individual researchers choose for their mobility experience. This can be summarized as scientific excellence, publication possibilities, institutional attractiveness, career development and revenues.

Instead of focusing on these factors a researcher from an EU country could e.g. be involved in a decision making body, such as a rectorate at an institution or possibly have a teaching position during the stay.

Couldn't the approach concerning outgoing mobility towards the Western Balkan Countries be a slightly different one than the one for a wealthy Western European Country?



Regarding **incoming mobility**:

The "Scientific Visa" concept is a major advantage for a WBC researcher going to the EU, not having to obtain extra work permits. It offers simplifications in the bureaucracy of working permits. Furthermore, the possibility of free movement from one EU country to another, without having to return home first for another visa, is crucial.

Nevertheless, the WBC have a much longer way to walk concerning mobility issues than the Member States! Income gaps are still remarkable in comparison to Western Europe, which attracts incoming mobility but not outgoing mobility. Furthermore, it makes the question of return difficult.

Can a mobile WBC researcher be attracted to return to his/her home country, bringing in new knowledge and experience or is he/she seen as a lost "expatriate" with no interest to return?



Operative transnational cooperative measures like workshops, partnering events, exchanges and researcher visits have shown to be the first right steps towards international mobility. Personal networking is extremely essential in reaching trust and further interest for a possible mobility exchange.

The "ERA Westbalkan+" project⁵⁵, follow up project of "ERA Westbalkan", is financed by the European Commission under FP6 as a Specific Support Action. It is a good example of supporting WBC on operational level. Austrian, Slovenian and Greek partners work together with partners in the Western Balkan region to intensify cooperation among researchers, especially within the 7th Framework Programme. The project is dedicated to following types of activities:

- Trans-regional networking events for researchers from research institutions in WBC, such as partnering days and researcher visits
- Cooperation and know-how exchange between National Contact Points (NCPs) in WBC and Member States
- Information days and trainings on relevant FP7 issues for the RTD communities in the WBC

⁵⁵ <http://www.erawestbalkanplus.net>

- The development and enhancement of the Western Balkan Research Database <http://www.westbalkanresearch.net/index.php> as a unique source for EU partners in finding Western Balkan researchers for their RTD projects.

A suggestion for WBC might be to find and make use of a mentor memberstate, like Austria did. Austria had a lot of cooperation activities with Germany and Switzerland in the past. Now Austria shows big efforts to arrange transnational activities with WBC and the neighbouring EU countries, such as Slovenia, Hungary and Slovakia.

Cooperation also takes place on a more political and administrative level in integrating WBC into ERA:

The South East European ERA NET⁵⁶ SEE ERA NET on the other hand is a political and administrative instrument to improve the integration of WBC research institutions into the rest of Europe by linking all interested European ministries and funding agencies. It coordinates and supports RTD activities at bilateral level. The aim is to integrate bilateral inter-governmental funding programmes between the 14 participating countries. Specialised RTD programme managers and high-level national political decision makers exchange best-practices and evaluate funding activities. SEE ERA NET is an essential front-face in the integration process of bilateral and multilateral research relations with Western Balkan countries.

A needs and offer analysis⁵⁷, elaborated by the “see-science.eu project”, an information office on research for the WBC, is providing interesting insights in the relation between existing and strong needs of RTD systems in WBC and available funding programmes. Regarding the mobility of researchers, lots of incentives and mobility supporting instruments exist, but still the discussed obstacles prevent researchers from WBC from being as mobile as they wished to be.

What impact do such existing initiatives and measures have on the cooperation level between the Western Balkan Countries and the EU? Do they contribute to enhanced incoming/outgoing mobility? Are there analyses about the beneficial impact of the results?



⁵⁶ <http://www.see-era.net/>

⁵⁷ http://www.see-science.eu/attach/D11_Need_Offer_Matrix_final2.pdf

To summarise, the mentioned supporting projects and their actions tackle the same issue, i.e. integration of the WBC into ERA. The awareness of international mobility in an integrated Europe should become clearer, through such initiatives. International mobility should not only be regarded as an option but a necessity for every researcher in Europe.

Today we don't know how the mobility rates towards Western Balkan Countries (WBC) will look like in 10 years. What we do know is that a lot of existing hurdles for mobility still have to be removed. Many important initiatives at operational as well as strategic/political level involving R&D key players and decision makers have been operational in the last few years.

Europe has started a process towards a free mobile European Research Area identifying and accepting the specific needs of researchers. This process definitely has to continue in that also the special needs of researchers in WBC have to be identified and met!

Annex I: Relevant Links and Documents

DG Education and Culture

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/index_en.html

Lisbon Strategy - Education and Training 2010

http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/et_2010_en.html

Bologna Process - Higher Education

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/bologna>

CEEPUS-Central European Exchange Program for University Studies

<http://www.ceepus.info/default.aspx>

Copenhagen Process – Vocational Education and Training

http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/vocational_en.html

COST-European Cooperation in the field of Scientific and Technical Research

<http://www.cost.esf.org/>

Higher Education in Lisbon Strategy

http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/lisbon_en.html

http://ec.europa.eu/research/conferences/2004/univ/followup_en.html

Towards a European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning

http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/consultations_en.html

ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) and Diploma Supplement

http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/socrates/ects/index_en.html

ECVET (European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training)

http://ec.europa.eu/education/ecvt/index_en.html

EUROPASS for better transparency of qualifications and skills

http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/europass/index_en.html

Erasmus Mundus (Co-operation and mobility programme in the field of higher education)

http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/mundus/index_en.html

The European Charter for Researchers

<http://ec.europa.eu/eracareers/europeancharter>

e-learning

http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/elearning/programme_en.html

ENIC (European Network of Information Centres) and NARIC (National Academic Recognition Information Centres) networks

<http://www.enic-naric.net>

PLOTEUS (Portal on Learning Opportunities Throughout Europe)

<http://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/portal>

Tuning educational structures in Europe

<http://tuning.unideusto.org/tuningeu>

ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education)

<http://www.enqa.eu>

ERA Westbalkan +

<http://www.erawestbalkanplus.net>

EUA (European University Association)

<http://www.eua.be>

EURASHE (European Association of Institutions in Higher Education)

<http://www.eurashe.eu>

ESIB (European Students Union)

<http://www.esib.org>

Council of Europe

<http://www.coe.int>

Life Long Learning

http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/newprog/index_en.html

SEE ERA Net

<http://www.see-era.net>

UNESCO-CEPES (European Centre for Higher Education)

<http://www.cepes.ro>

WBC Inco Net

<http://www.wbc-inco.net>

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