



Editorial

Dear readers,

the 6th edition of the WBC-INCO.NET Journal marks the beginning of a new phase in the Co-ordination of Research Policies with the Western Balkan Countries: WBC-INCO.NET ENHANCED. The official Kick-Off Meeting will take place on November 12, 2010 in Bečići, Montenegro, following the 9th meeting of the Steering Platform on Research for the Western Balkan countries on November 11.

Further information on WBC-INCO.NET ENHANCED and its innovation focus is available on page 5. To find out more about the future Innovation Union – the key to achieving the goals of the Europe 2020 Strategy – please read the related article contributed by the European Commission (see page 3). On page 4, we are featuring an article by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation, looking back on the focuses of the recent Spanish EU Council Presidency.

Furthermore, we are giving you an overview on the new FP7 calls, which have been opened since June 2010 (see page 2). The Conclusions of the past Steering Platform meeting, which took place in Belgrade on June 24, 2010 are presented on pages 1 and 2. As usual, our journal also includes a large number of articles dealing with S&T in the Western Balkans, contributed by WBC-INCO.NET project partners, as well as with regional initiatives and projects.

Feedback on the WBC-INCO.NET journal as well as on the project in general is always welcome. We are also happy to receive your input for news articles and event announcements on our website www.wbc-inco.net. Please feel free to contact us at office@wbc-inco.net.

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P.S.: WBC-INCO.NET also publishes a bi-weekly eJournal including all recent updates on its web portal. To register, please go to <http://www.wbc-inco.net/ejournal/list>.

Imprint

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ISSN 1991-1750
Subscription and recent issues: <http://www.wbc-inco.net/ejournal/list>

8th Steering Platform Meeting: Conclusions

The Steering Platform on Research for the Western Balkan countries met in Belgrade on June 24, 2010. The meeting was co-chaired by the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the Republic of Serbia on behalf of the Western Balkan countries (WBCs), which hosted the event, and the European Commission.

The presentations of the progress reports again showed that both the Balkan countries and the other platform members and stakeholders had taken many actions over the last six months to strengthen their research capacity. Actions varied from research funding activities and promotion of research cooperation at national level, to that with other countries in the region as well as under FP7. All Balkan countries announced further measures and actions aimed at reinforcing their national research strategy. An increasing number of bilateral S&T agreements have been concluded over the last six months, which is another indication of the interest and potential in developing further international research cooperation. From the progress reports it was established that strengthening the research capacity requires measures at various levels – national, regional, European – and in different areas, including higher education, infrastructure, science and technology as well as innovation. The importance for the Steering Platform of focusing more on innovation in the future was mentioned in this context.

On the basis of concrete examples of projects supported by the EU Pre-Accession Instrument (IPA), the Platform discussed the possibility to strengthen the research capacity in the Balkans through IPA. This issue could be brought to the attention of the Hungarian Presidency for possible further consideration at the WIRE II Conference. The Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP) is another instrument that offers good opportunities for the Balkan countries, as well as the Enterprise Europe Network which offers support to SMEs throughout the EU and partner countries, including all the Balkan countries.

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8th Meeting of the Steering Platform, Belgrade, Serbia

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From the presentation of the data it emerged that since their association to FP7, the participation of the WBCs in the Framework Programme has increased. Further improvements are needed, particularly in the area of researchers' mobility. It is important that, as highlighted in the study on patterns of cooperation, the research entities from the Balkan countries participate more actively in collaborative research projects, including taking on the role of coordinators. In addition, particular attention should be devoted to the involvement of SMEs and industry in general in research cooperation.

The outcome of the evaluation of the call for joint European research projects organised under the SEE-ERA.NET PLUS FP7 project is a good demonstration of the high potential for effective research collaboration in the region. The presentation of the outcome of the FP7 Research Potential programme showed that this action meets the real needs of the research institutions in the Balkan countries and hence, the importance to continue with such actions in the future.

The Steering Platform took stock of the present level of participation of WBCs in COST activities and welcomed their increased and further involvement.

The Steering Platform also welcomed progress in the project "Regional Strategy for Research and Development for Innovation for WB", supported by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and to be funded by the EU IPA fund, and expects that the project will contribute to an effective implementation of the Ministerial declaration on the regional dimension of research adopted

in Sarajevo on April 24, 2009. The Platform acknowledged the successful organisation by the Turkish authorities and the RCC of a regional workshop on public research institutes, held in Istanbul on March 8 to 9, 2010, as part of an effort to enhance the role of public research institutions in technological development of WBCs and their integration into the ERA.

The presentation of the Central European Initiative (CEI) offered a good overview of the cooperation opportunities offered by this regional forum, in particular in human resource development. The Platform welcomed the prospect of possible cooperation in the future.

The Platform welcomed the progress made within ESFRI's Regional Issues working group with respect to research infrastructures at the regional level and encouraged active WBC involvement in the ongoing discussions on how to foster development of regional partner facilities at the South-Eastern-European level.

The Steering Platform started reviewing, based on its conclusions of the previous meeting, its working methods and practices with regards to improving the effectiveness and impact of deliberations. This should be done, inter alia, through more focused meeting agendas, allowing for sufficient time for debate, through involvement of the members in the preparation of the agendas, and through a follow-up on conclusions.

LINK

Steering Platform Meeting in Belgrade ■

<http://www.wbc-inco.net/organisation/96958.html>

Massive Wave of Investment in Research and Innovation

The European Commission (EC) launched a large number of calls within the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7), some of which are especially interesting for the WBCs. There are many opportunities to receive funding across a wide range of priority areas.

Calls have been launched across almost all thematic priority areas. Over € 600 million will be allocated to research in health, ICT developments supporting the European Digital Agenda framework will receive € 1.2 million. € 800 million will be spent to support SMEs – the backbone of the European economy. There are new areas launched for nanotechnologies and environmental research.

ICT, being one of the dominating thematic priorities for WBC participation, makes up for 13.4 % of all WBC project participations. Other thematic priorities comprise the areas of Food, Agriculture, Fisheries, Biotechnology (FAFB) and Nano-Sciences, Nano-Technologies, Materials and New Production Technologies (NMP).

In the framework of Work Package 2 of the WBC-INCO.NET project, a priority setting process took place with the main goal to identify joint RTD priorities and potentials for the region of the Western Balkan countries. Researchers from the WBCs have full access to all open calls. All countries from the region and associated to FP7 are equal to EU Member States in the process.

Researchers and research institutions from the WBCs should pay specific attention to two specialised schemes:

1. Unlocking and developing the research potential of research entities established in the EU's convergence regions and outermost regions – FP7-REGPOT-2011-1. This action aims at strengthening the potential of research entities established in the convergence and outermost regions

of the European Union that need to increase their knowledge and further enhance their potential concerning infrastructure and human resources and to ensure sustainability via networking and cooperation.

2. The ERC Starting Independent Researcher Grants (ERC Starting Grants) – ERC-2011-StG will boost the independent careers of excellent researchers by providing adequate support at a critical stage, meaning when they are about to start or consolidate their own independent research team or programme.

In conclusion, it is noticed that no dedicated calls are launched for countries from the WBC region. Even though FP7 guarantees equal access, so far the research potential of the WBCs cannot be benchmarked with that of bigger EU players. This call package is the biggest ever covering a variety of research disciplines. But will it improve the scientific boundaries of less developed Associated Countries? Excellence is sometimes the "sole" criterion, but is it possible to reach excellence in the periphery equal to countries in the center?

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EU 2020 Strategy: Focus on Innovation

Innovation is one of the focuses of the new European Commission (EC) and, in particular, of the Commissioner for Research and Innovation, Máire Geoghegan-Quinn. The fact that Europe should consider the innovation dimension more is an integral part of the EU 2020 strategy, which announced the creation of the Innovation Union as one of the flagships to restore economic growth and jobs in Europe.

On October 6, 2010, the EC adopted the Communication on the Innovation Union, which sets out the ideas and actions necessary for the creation of the Innovation Union, for “more jobs, improved lives, better society”.

The Communication identifies problems well known in Europe, such as too much fragmentation and not enough valorisation of research efforts, while at the same time setting out in a very concrete way what should and can be done to inject, at all levels of government and industry, more innovation into Europe in order to transform and boost the economy and to respond to the grand challenges which we are all facing.

The EC calls upon all stakeholders, government and private sector, all policies and instruments to contribute to the creation of the Innovation Union. The EC will take many actions and proposals on its own account by proposing actions and legislation. For each aspect of the research to innovation chain, the Communication already proposes some concrete actions and their timing.

Delivering on the European Research Area Is Vital

The Innovation Union aims at building upon what has already been started, and that is, the creation of the European Research Area (ERA). The Communication calls for more efforts to realise all the ERA building blocks and to increase investment in research, both from the public and private sector, on the mobility of researchers, on the realisation of European infrastructures as identified in the European Strategy Forum for Research Infrastructure and on focusing research funding. With respect to international cooperation, there should be more consistency between the EU and national S&T strategies.

Candidate and potential candidate countries are expected to contribute to the realisation of the Innovation Union. It is thus of key importance that they have a national strategy to increase investment in research; that they set targets and take measures to encourage the private sector and industry to invest in research as a means to strengthen the national research capacity.

From “Ideas to Market”

More attention and support actions are required to ensure the chain from “Good Ideas to the Market” and in doing so, shift to an innovation market, both for products and services. This requires better framework conditions and access to capital to make the valorisation of research possible and quicker. In this context, the importance of an EU-wide patent and access to venture capital are once more underlined. The state-aid rules on research and technological development should also be reviewed so as to clarify which innovation projects can be supported. The efforts needed to facilitate the commercialisation of research efforts have been clearly identified in the section on “Creating a single innovation market”. Too often the scientific knowledge is available, but either unknown or its valorisation is hampered. For this, the EC calls for more harmonised rules for product



Innovation is one of the focuses of the new European Commission.

approvals; more attention to be paid to environmental standards; and the need to have more information on the state-of-the-art in given technologies so that policy decisions can be taken with full knowledge, taking into account the latest research and technological developments.

Calling upon Innovation through FP7

Funding of research should also be tackled in order to contribute to the realisation of the Innovation Union. Already in the last years of FP7, we can expect that calls for proposals will reflect the objectives set out in the Innovation Union Communication and consequently, research consortia will have to demonstrate that their research contributes to the innovation gap and enhances Europe’s competitiveness by notably including SMEs in the research chain.

A New Vehicle: “European Innovation Partnerships”

To bring all these actors and instruments together, it is proposed to create European Innovation Partnerships and to continue the work in a more inclusive way, involving under one roof all stakeholders, relevant policies, as well as the different types of measures and funding schemes. Societal challenges identified in the EU 2020 strategy, such as those of active and healthy ageing, smart mobility, water efficiency or sustainable supply of raw materials could be tackled through an Innovation Partnership.

Roadmap for Implementation: A First Welcome

A first debate on the proposed Innovation Union took place at the Competitiveness Council in Luxembourg on October 12. In general, the Communication was very much welcomed. The Belgian Presidency has put the implementation of the Innovation Union high on its agenda and aims to come up with concrete recommendations at the next Competitiveness Council in November 2010.

What is in for WBCs

The WBCs, as candidate and potential candidate countries, are directly concerned by this Communication. Therefore, it is suggested to read the Communication on the Innovation Union, because it not only summarises well the known problems and bottlenecks in the EU, but makes very concrete suggestions and proposals on how to create a true Innovation Union by 2020. And as can be seen from the above, it is not about from research to innovation but both research and innovation should be actively considered. The timing of WBC-INCO.NET ENHANCED is thus perfect, as it should help addressing the innovation dimension in and for the WBCs.

LINKS

European Commission ■ <http://www.wbc-inco.net/organisation/98.html>
Download the Communication on the Innovation Union at ■
<http://www.wbc-inco.net/object/document/81914.html>

The Spanish EU Presidency: Integration – Involvement – Inclusion

eu 2010.es

Integration – Involvement – Inclusion were the three axes on which Spain based its presidency in the area of research and innovation during the first half of 2010. These three priority areas have guided all activities undertaken by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation, including 18 events, seven high-level meetings, one Informal Competitiveness Council in San Sebastián in February and two Competitiveness Councils in Brussels, in March and in May 2010.

Integration

The Spanish Presidency of the EU has taken an important step by addressing the issue of mobility and professional career opportunities for European researchers, first in the Competitiveness Council and subsequently by taking the Council's conclusions to the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO) for the first time, to allow specific measures to be taken within its area of responsibility.

Next to improving the working conditions of researchers, the Spanish Presidency has addressed an important number of specific issues such as the scientific infrastructures included in the road-map of the European Strategy Forum for Research Infrastructures (ESFRI), Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) and support for women in European science and technology. These issues have been included in the conclusions of different aspects of the European Research Area (ERA) approved by the last Competitiveness Council in May.

The Spanish Presidency has also brought about substantial improvements to the governance of the European Research Council (ERC) and the Scientific and Technical Research Committee (CREST). For the latter, these improvements now stronger reflect the Committee's strategic role in building the European Research Area and hence, it has been renamed to "European Research Area Committee – ERAC".

The Spanish Presidency has also promoted the adoption of conclusions from the Council aimed at providing political guidelines for the Committee and the Member States regarding the next European Research and Innovation Plan, which has been presented in September. The conclusions approved by the Council cover five broad areas: funding, markets, governance, regions and people, coinciding almost exactly with the areas covered by the State Innovation Strategy (E2I) currently being prepared by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation.

Involvement

Through this key area, the Spanish Presidency of the EU aimed to emphasise the need for science and innovation to address major challenges, starting with the economic crisis. This was the main topic of the San Sebastián/Donostia Declaration entitled "Science for recovery and economic growth: here and now" and endorsed by all EU Member States. Important steps have been taken towards reducing bureaucracy within European R&D programmes and promoting the adoption of a set of conclusions on this matter at the Council meeting in May – steps, which will be taken up by the next presidency.



Informal Competitiveness Council at San Sebastián, Spain



Research Commissioner Máire Geoghegan-Quinn (left) and Spanish Minister for Science and Innovation Christina Garmendia



Audience at the European Conference on Research Infrastructures

Inclusion

The Spanish Presidency also aimed to ensure that a knowledge-based Europe works towards a science sector that is more committed and of higher profile. Following the "Science against poverty" conference in La Granja (Segovia) in April, the May Competitiveness Council put the focus on developing the social dimension of the ERA as a cross-cutting means of promoting scientific and technological excellence, also exploring a common space between development co-operation and R&D, while at the same time reducing poverty and combating social exclusion.

Besides these topics, an agreement on the adoption of the BONUS Programme has been reached and the Spanish Presidency could take important steps forward in the negotiations on the ITER project.

The Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation also co-chaired the WBC Steering Platform on June 24 in Belgrade, where it also advocated for improving the governance of the same. The conclusions of this Steering Platform meeting can be found on pages 1 and 2 of this journal.

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Outlook: WBC-INCO.NET ENHANCED

In October 2010, the WBC-INCO.NET project entered a new, extended phase: WBC-INCO.NET ENHANCED. The general aim of the ENHANCED project is to put a specific focus on innovation-related activities, while continuing the successful coordination and cooperation established by the current WBC-INCO.NET until 2013.

In essence, innovation is a firm-based process, driven by the market and dependent on many implicit and explicit factors of the innovation system. Therefore, innovation cooperation and capacity building involve complex aspects of interaction between science and the production sphere in order to translate research results into commercial products, processes and services.

To guarantee full coverage and involvement of the innovation policy stakeholders in the region, the WBC-INCO.NET consortium is complemented with three new ministerial partners for the ENHANCED phase of the project: the Directorate for Development of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in Montenegro, the Ministry of Economy of the FYR of Macedonia and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Energy of Albania. Furthermore, a WBC Innovation Group of Experts was created, covering high-level experts from the region and beyond in order to provide input to and spread the results of the project. Several partners and members of the WBC Innovation Group of Experts of WBC-INCO.NET ENHANCED are also involved in various innovation-related networks and activities.

Building up on the concept that boosting innovation by applying research results is a key determinant for competitiveness, WBC-INCO.NET ENHANCED will implement the following measures in order to support innovation

capacities in the region:

- Development of an Action Plan for further WBC cooperation in the field of innovation and closer cooperation between research and innovation stakeholders,
- Exchange of information and best practices on innovation policies,
- Implementation of trainings on technology transfer for innovation stakeholders and
- Awareness raising measures for the research community concerning market demands and benefits of innovation.

In addition, WBC-INCO.NET ENHANCED will prolong a number of measures established by the current WBC-INCO.NET project, such as the support to the Steering Platform on Research for the Western Balkan Countries. The Steering Platform meetings will be fed with input by the newly implemented Innovation Dialogue Fora, bringing together stakeholders of the public and private sector in the region, experts from the European Commission as well as representatives of relevant multilateral initiatives and programmes. A first Innovation Dialogue Forum was successfully held on November 8 to 9, 2010 in Montenegro, focusing on the national innovation systems in the WBCs.

LINK [WBC-INCO.NET/WBC-INCO.NET ENHANCED ▪ http://www.wbc-inco.net/organisation/2789.html](http://www.wbc-inco.net/organisation/2789.html)

Review: WBC-INCO.NET @ ESOF2010

The Euroscience Open Forum (ESOF2010) took place in Turin, Italy, from July 2 to 7, 2010 under the slogan "Passion for Science". It was a unique opportunity to meet and to discuss important and central issues in science and technology.

The Scientific Programme of ESOF2010 hosted round tables, workshops, debates and seminars, which addressed the most topical issues in scientific research and explored the interactions between researchers, industry, policy, media, and the wider public.

"Over 4,000 participants at the congress, almost 60 % of whom aged under 35, from 82 countries, 780 speakers and exhibitors (34 % of them women), five Nobel laureates, over 400 journalists from Japan to China, from Australia to Europe", Enrico Predazzi, President of ESOF2010, summarises the Italian edition that closed on July 7 at Lingotto Turin.

WBC-INCO.NET participated with a stand at ESOF2010. Coordinator Silvo Korez and representatives of the Serbian Ministry of Science and Technological Development Željka Dukić and Jelena Kolić staffed the stand to promote WBC excellence and research cooperation to EU researchers.



WBC-INCO.NET participated with a stand at ESOF2010.

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LINK [ESOF2010 ▪ http://www.wbc-inco.net/object/calendar/38991.html](http://www.wbc-inco.net/object/calendar/38991.html)



News from Albania

Albania Reforms Financing of Higher Education

Albania plans a reform of financing its system of higher education by changing the traditional way of financing from a funding mechanism based on the institutional profile to a student-based mechanism. It is expected to be one of the most radical reforms in higher education in Albania and will have a substantial effect on the way universities are perceived and operate, as it alters the set of factors that lead the higher education development, making students and the quality of education the main drivers of educational development in Albania.

The sector of higher education in Albania experienced a “furious” expansion on both the demand and supply side during the last five years. Liberalising access to public higher education has increased the number of students by around 2.5 times. This demand led to a fast development in the private sector. In 2009, there were 36 private higher educational institutions, compared to almost none before 2000.

The traditional concept of universities has evolved and public-private partnership is becoming a common way to financially support their development into open, modern centers of knowledge accumulation and exchange.

Initiatives to reform university funding mechanisms aim at strengthening the universities’ leading role in the country’s socio-economic development, at increasing the accessibility of universities for the Albanian youth and, above all, at increasing the quality of higher education introducing a degree of competition among higher educational institutions (HEI).

Main Principles and Instruments of the Reform

The main principle of the financial reform is that the allocation of public funds to universities will be student-based; eligible universities will receive public funds for teaching according to the number of eligible students they are able to recruit.

There will be three kinds of instruments, which will be used to apply the student-based funding system to allocate public funds to HEI, i.e.

1. financial subsidies per student to cover parts of the tuition fees,
2. tuition fees that will be paid through the student loan scheme, and lastly
3. full scholarships.

Both public and private institutions are eligible for funding. While public universities are eligible by default, private HEI have to be non-for-profit entities and satisfy a quality threshold.

The number of eligible students will be defined by a student’s individual academic performance and the total capacity of the specific HEI. Academic performance will be measured by the student’s Grade Point Average (GPA) on the level of secondary education and the State Matura Examination results. The total budget allocated to HE as well as the overall capacity of the system to accept students without hurting the quality of education will constitute the upper limit to the number of students eligible for public subsidies in their studies.

The amount of subsidy each student will benefit from depends on the costs of their individual studies contingent on the academic field, the geographic region and related costs of service delivery.

The degree of cost recovery may vary for different fields of study. Fields of higher national interest, i.e. fields of national priority fostering the development of human capital and important to the development of the national economy, will receive more funding through a higher level of financing.

The five percent of students in each field of study with the best results in the State Matura will be awarded full scholarships, i.e. merit scholarships. Graduate students will be supported through scholarships of excellence.

The difference between the tuition fees and the value of financial subsidy given to the students will be paid by the students themselves. The government plans to install a soft student loan to support payment of this amount. Every student enrolled in a public or private HEI will be entitled to receive such a soft loan, with a defined maximum value. The interest on these loans will be subsidised by the Albanian government. Students from poor families will be entitled to a loan in exactly the same way and on the same terms as all other students, with the repayments starting with their career entry.

Other Elements of Financing

The Strategic Development Fund of HEI will be a funding mechanism based on “competitive bidding” of project proposals that universities prepare. These are projects that help in the institution’s development, such as infrastructure development, projects to improve quality measures, the opening of new programmes, projects to enhance the cooperation between universities and businesses and projects that support regional development.

In summary, Albania’s scientific research activities will be funded in three ways; fundamental research activities associated with teaching and academic staff development will be covered by student-based funding. Scientific research activities in universities or research institutes within universities will be financed by public funding managed through the Agency of Research, Technology and Innovation. Other funding sources will be non-public research support such as various donor’s or commercial contracts and consultancy service, EU funding (FP7) that a university will be able to raise when participating in regional or national research projects.

The financing reform on higher education significantly expands the autonomy of universities. To ensure the adaptability and efficiency of the universities within the framework of this new scheme of financing, their management and governance as well as their internal system of quality assurance have to undergo changes and adjustments, necessary to ensure the accountability of universities.

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LINK Albanian Ministry of Education and Science ▪ <http://www.wbc-inco.net/organisation/70.html>



News from Bosnia and Herzegovina

ERAWATCH Country Profile for Bosnia and Herzegovina

In August 2010, Bosnia and Herzegovina's country profile was published at the European Commission's information platform ERAWATCH on European, national and regional research systems and policies. The country profile presents an overview of the research system in Bosnia and Herzegovina describing the main elements of the country's national and the regional research system, the main stakeholders, current research policy issues and anticipated policy developments.

Support for FP7 Activities

The Bosnian Ministry of Civil Affairs has supported activities aimed at increasing the numbers of and stimulating researchers and research institutions to participate in FP7. In 2010, the Ministry of Civil Affairs has launched two calls to support research projects and individual researchers in Bosnia and Herzegovina by means of grants totalling € 255,000.

The Ministry supports the preparation of projects already approved by the European Commission, projects in the application stage related to all FP7 specific programmes and themes, and present or future scientific and research projects in the framework of COST and EUREKA. The first call, which was open from March to April 2010, supported 17 projects with an overall grant of € 153,000. The second call was open in September 2010 and is in the process of realisation.

International R&D Financing Conference

In late spring, an International R&D Financing Conference was organised in Sarajevo. The conference welcomed participants from the academic sector, the government and international experts with the aim to facilitate dialogue on R&D financing between politicians, universities and the private sector and the main international donors and organisations in the country.

The conference was an opportunity for Bosnian policy makers to present national strategic goals in research and development for the next five years. With the premise of low and uncertain public funding of R&D, both the country's policy makers in the field of science and foreign experts highlighted that in the area of science and technology, a country needs to act today in order to create a real impact after five to ten years. Science and technology should be a key factor for social development and economic competitiveness.

E-CRIS.RS

The Ministry of Science and Technology of Republika Srpska (MSTRS) in cooperation with the Institute of Information Science in Maribor, Slovenia, started activities to set up a data base comprising information on research institutions, researchers, and research projects in Republika Srpska called E-CRIS.RS.

MSTRS and the Serbian Ministry of Science and Technological Development signed a Memorandum of scientific and technological cooperation, which should foster the development of joint research projects, joint research centres, as well as the coordination of activities in the field of scientific national and international programmes.



Participants at the International R&D Financing Conference in Sarajevo in late spring.

Food, Agriculture and Fisheries, and Biotechnology Info Day

The Ministry of Civil Affairs together with the University of Eastern Sarajevo organised an FP7 Info Day on Food, Agriculture and Fisheries, and Biotechnology on September 24, 2010.

The Info Day was an opportunity to inform and share knowledge about the main characteristics of FP7 with researchers in these thematic fields, in particular about the second thematic priority KBBE, as well as about the financial and administrative rules and procedures of FP7.

21st Annual Scientific Expert Conference in Agriculture and Food Industry

Following a long and successful tradition, the Faculty of Agriculture and Food Sciences of the University of Sarajevo organised the 21st Annual Scientific Expert Conference in Agriculture and Food Industry in Neum, Bosnia and Herzegovina, which took place from September 29, 2010 to October 2, 2010.

The conference was an excellent forum for stakeholders from the local and regional sector to sit together, exchange information, expertise and experience in order to develop a productive discussion as the first, but crucial step towards a faster development of the sector.

The conference is nationally and regionally recognised as a very important forum. Therefore, it is no surprise that 170 works were registered to be presented at the Conference, i.e. 108 works from Bosnia and Herzegovina, 19 from Serbia, 15 from Albania, 12 from Croatia, five from the FYR of Macedonia, three from Slovenia, two each from Kosovo (under UNSCR 1244) and Montenegro, and one each from Turkey, Slovakia, Norway and Hungary. More than 260 involved knowledgeable participants, exciting papers and discussions are excellent fundamentals ensuring the achievement of the main conference objective: the improvement of the sector's performance.

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LINKS [Bosnian Ministry of Civil Affairs ▪ http://www.wbc-inco.net/organisation/527.html](http://www.wbc-inco.net/organisation/527.html)
[Scientific Expert Conference in Agriculture and Food Industry ▪ http://www.wbc-inco.net/object/calendar/94209.html](http://www.wbc-inco.net/object/calendar/94209.html)



News from Croatia

ASHE: New Strategy for 2010 to 2014

Ever since its establishment, the Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE) has actively participated in a wide range of interventions aimed at changes and reforms in the field of quality assurance in science and higher education. Its task is to implement various procedures of external quality evaluation of higher education and science to continuously educate and provide training for quality assurance experts and to counsel higher education institutions and scientific organisations in improving the quality of their activities.

ASHE has now mapped out a strategy for its activities for the years 2010 to 2014. Annual revisions of the stage of implementation of the activities connected with individual goals will serve to monitor the success of the whole strategy. Within this strategy, two general strategic objectives can be identified.

Setting the strategic objective of quality assurance and development in science and higher education, ASHE plans to achieve long-term goals related to its participation in creating policies, national guidelines and a culture of quality in science and higher education in Croatia. In relation to this, ASHE finds it particularly relevant to improve its internal quality culture and continue with the development of the National Information System for Science and Higher Education, as well as to establish a national quality assurance network for its stakeholders.

Within the strategic objective of developing its national and international recognisability and reliability, ASHE seeks to achieve the long-term goals of connecting the national quality assurance network with the international quality assurance networks in higher education, and developing and improving cooperation with similar agencies in Europe and globally.

In relation to this, it is particularly important to join the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) as soon as possible, as a part of the continuous effort to enhance the reliability of ASHE.

Improvements of EURAXESS Croatia

EURAXESS Croatia is the one-stop-shop to search job vacancies and fellowship opportunities in over 30 European countries. In addition, an extensive database of CVs of research talents from around the world is available for employers to find the right candidate. This constantly evolving research career website has now improved even further.

A brand new section on fellowship programmes offers a wide variety of fellowship opportunities in fields ranging from chemistry and neurosciences to ethics in health sciences.

Also, the number of national EURAXESS websites has increased. To date, there are 29 national portals providing specific information on the country's research landscape and further targeted job vacancies.

A tutorial video on how to make the most of EURAXESS Jobs as an employer is now available in English, French, German, Spanish and Portuguese. It provides details on how to publish job vacancies and fellowship opportunities.

Furthermore, the first-ever edition of the EURAXESS Magazine provides news on EURAXESS and success stories from around the world. The functionalities for the job vacancies and fellowships search pages have also improved. The improvements include a search assisting functionality and the newly added QR code allowing you to link individual job or fellowship opportunities to your smartphone for immediate processing.

New REGPOT Projects Have Been Signed

This summer, two REGPOT Projects from Croatia have been signed.

The first one is the **"TransMedRi"** project awarded in the framework of the EU-FP7-REGPOT programme, which aims to strengthen the research potential of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Rijeka for transnational research in biomedicine, particularly in the fields of infectious diseases and cancer.

The project objectives include a closer cooperation between several basic and clinical research groups, the recruitment of several experienced researchers from abroad, the establishment of new laboratories and a bio-bank, the training of young researchers in foreign laboratories, the organisation of several courses and the procurement of research equipment. The project will be supported by the EU Commission with € 1,853,941 for 36 months.

The second project is **Particle Detectors**. This project aims to improve the development of detector systems and testing capabilities of the nuclear and particle physics laboratories of the Ruđer Bošković Institute (RBI), in order to satisfy the demands of these modern experiments. Novel detectors and instrumentation will be acquired.

Partnerships with seven European institutions that possess exceptional know-how will be strengthened, and experienced researchers exchanged with them. Thematic workshops will be organised. Qualified scientists that will enhance the research capacity will be hired and integrated at the facility. The realisation of this project will have a synergetic effect, resulting in a high-quality detector system development facility, as well as in an enhanced performance of large European physics experiments.

The upgraded facility will be unique in Croatia with potential benefits for the broader scientific community including national universities and the industry. The budget of the project amounts to € 1,319,538.

AUTHOR Damir Jeličić ▪ <http://www.wbc-inco.net/users/186.html>

LINK Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports ▪ <http://www.wbc-inco.net/organisation/73.html>



News from the FYR of Macedonia

Joint Information Exchange Event with JRC

Together with the European Commission's Joint Research Center (JRC), the Ministry of Education and Science organised a JRC Information Exchange Event in Skopje on October 5, 2010.

Welcome addresses at the event were held by Nikola Todorov, Minister for Education and Science, Atanas Kocov, Member of the JRC Board of Governors and Ulla Engelmann, Head of the Stakeholder Relations Unit at JRC. Speeches were given on the purpose and mission of JRC, JRC's large-scale infrastructures, on possibilities for collaboration and examples of collaboration with the FYR of Macedonia. Thematic presentations were held on nanotechnology and environmental engineering at the JRC and on JRC's support for a sustainable agriculture and rural development in the Western Balkans.

Promotion of Open Calls in FP7

Furthermore, the Ministry of Education and Science organised an information and promotion event on September 21, 2010. Presentations by the National Contact Points focused on the currently open FP7 calls, which are of particular importance in view of the research priorities of the FYR of Macedonia (such as health, transport, energy, NMP and ICT), followed by a discussion. More than 100 participants attended the event, representing the academic and business sector, SMEs as well as local governments.

International Annual Congress ESAO 2010

From September 8 to 11, 2010, the International Annual Congress ESAO 2010 was held by the European Society of Artificial Organs at the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts.

The aim of the congress was to bring together and to foster the exchange between and the collaboration among clinicians and scientists from the field of biotechnologies and bioengineering as well as industrial partners from all over the world. Furthermore, students and post-docs as well as clinicians, engineers, and scientists in early career stages met in Skopje for the "yESAO young researchers initiative". This initiative was dedicated to the exchange of ideas and experiences in the interdisciplinary field of artificial organs, the discussion of career development paths, fund raising via joint research projects and networking.

FP7 was promoted as part of the congress. The presentation given by the Ministry of Education and Science emphasised the possibilities for young researchers offered by the People programme and the funding opportunities for health research, in particular in the framework of the open FP7 call.

LINK

Macedonian Ministry of Education and Science ■
<http://www.wbc-inco.net/organisation/87.html>

ICEIM-MANU – The Research Center for Energy, Informatics and Materials at the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts

The Research Center for Energy, Informatics and Materials (ICEIM) at the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts (MANU) was founded in 1986, with the aim to initiate, coordinate and perform fundamental and applied research in certain priority areas of its domain. Today, the Center's permanent staff consists of six academicians, one professor and four research assistants.

In the past two decades, ICEIM's permanent researches have published more than 450 papers in international scientific journals, as well as a large number of contributions in monographs and proceedings of national and international conferences. Up to now, 75 research projects have been realised in the Center, by numerous national and international collaborators.



Staff members of ICEIM.

Currently, ICEIM is involved in eleven international and nine national projects. The international projects are financed by foreign funds, i.e. FP6 and FP7, COST, the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) and the International Atomic Energy Agency, as well as by foreign governments. On the ground of success in the European Commission's open calls, ICEIM is accepted as a center of excellence, fulfilling the criteria of the World Inter-Academy Council.

The international affirmation of ICEIM is also confirmed by the fact that the Center is a national focal point in the International Database of the IAEA and of the World Solar Process of UNESCO. Furthermore, it is the domicile of the

Macedonian National Committee of the World Energy Council and a member of the International Network of Centers for Sustainable Development. Since 2005, the Center has also been the seat of the multi-disciplinary EU-COST Action "Electrical Neuronal Oscillations and Cognition" with participation of more than 80 scientific institutions from 27 countries from all continents, being the first European project of this kind managed outside the EU.

On the national level, the Center is a founder and organiser of the scientific forum "Challenges and Shadows of Science" that is periodically held in MANU. In order to enhance the inclusion of Macedonian scientists in the European research programmes, the Center, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science, has organised several workshops targeted towards the preparation of projects for the open calls of EU research programmes. Furthermore, the "Young Scientist of the Year" prize is awarded for the sixth time this year.

LINK

ICEIM-MANU ■ <http://www.wbc-inco.net/organisation/781.html>



News from Montenegro

Development of the Lifelong Learning Concept in Montenegro

The University of Montenegro (UoM) is naturally looked upon as the institution which should act as the promoter and bearer of changes necessary to fulfill the requirements of the changing labour market. One of the challenges the University as well as the whole nation face is the creation of a favourable environment for enabling flexible and adaptable programmes and courses, so as to keep pace with the fast changing labour market needs. The orientation of Montenegro towards a knowledge-based society is one of the proclaimed national objectives and UoM is the main party responsible for its achievement. Now, UoM addresses the concept of life-long learning (LLL) and thus, puts the national focus on this extremely important issue.

A national TEMPUS project with a focus on LLL was started with UoM as the grant holder. The project's broad aim is to improve learning opportunities for Montenegrin society at large and to achieve higher employability. This will be achieved through the development of a LLL strategy with the aims to enable a wider access to higher education, to incorporate non-formal and informal education into the overarching national qualification framework and to enhance partnerships with relevant social partners.

The project will mainly focus on the legislative framework for the introduction of a LLL concept, the cooperation with enterprises in this field, the improvement of flexible learning paths for adults, the improvement of connections between stakeholders to foster vertical and horizontal access, the implementation of a comprehensive dissemination campaign on LLL, the creation of a day-to-day and overall management process and the development and implementation of a quality plan.

The major objective of the LLL strategy is to redefine the position and the role of universities in society, so that UoM can serve the entire society to a greater extent than it did before.

COST Promotion Activities in Montenegro

In its full commitment to join the European Research Area, the Ministry of Education and Science has taken actions to stimulate the cooperation of researchers with their international peers within COST. Providing support in international cooperation, COST is a great opportunity to exchange experience with global participants and an ideal entry point for Montenegrin young researchers. The Ministry of Education and Science adopted the action plan for joining COST and started with its implementation in June 2010. On June 18, 2010 in Podgorica, the Ministry organised an Info Day, where promotional material about COST was disseminated. Furthermore, individual meetings with researchers and coordinators of running national projects were held. In a second stage, a COST Info Day was held at the end of October in Podgorica including a meeting of interested research teams from universities and research institutions, which want to participate in running COST activities, with representatives of the COST Committee of Senior Officials and the COST Office. Several teams have been created and will join COST activities during the next six months. This will form the basis for a formal application of Montenegro for COST membership.

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LINK *University of Montenegro* ▪ <http://www.wbc-inco.net/organisation/488.html>

Opening of the R&D Service Centre (R&D SC) at the University of Montenegro

The recently opened R&D SC at UoM is the first attempt to foster the income of external project funding at the university with the clear idea to transform it into the first nucleus of technology transfer.

The list of services that R&D SC is already offering includes the management of existing projects, support in the development and contracting of new projects, consultancy and support in writing new project proposals and fundraising, the coordination of bigger multidisciplinary groups inside UoM for new project ideas, the dissemination of information about available funds and open calls, the organisation of various lessons, trainings, events and workshops and assistance in the partner search for new projects.

Its future profile is going to be redefined with a broader set of activities including the matter of legal ownership of start-ups, project results and issues concerning intellectual property rights.

The list of services offered by R&D SC is going to gradually increase and to include the establishment and running of new research centers inside UoM, new contracts and research projects with industry partners, the participation in the establishment and running of spin-off companies and the formation of a small incubator for start-up companies with innovative ideas.

LINK *R&D Service Centre at UoM* ▪ <http://www.wbc-inco.net/organisation/97143.html>

Flash News from Montenegro

On October 22, Montenegro and the FYR of Macedonia signed a bilateral agreement on scientific and technological cooperation.

A round table on inter-university cooperation through established networks was held on October 1, 2010 in Bar, Montenegro. The following programmes were presented at the round table: MEDADRION, UNIMED, EMUNI, CEI, UNIADRION, MEDITERRANEAN OFFICE FOR YOUTH and CEEPUS III. Moreover, the crucial elements of future cooperation as well as expected results and benefits of an inter-university network cooperation were identified.

The new Law on Scientific Research Activity, which is expected to be adopted by the end of this year, legally regulates the possibility of establishing Centres of Excellence. The Ministry introduced a few new instruments in the Law, the most important of which is the instrument for employment of the doctors of sciences, who have not been elected in academic or scientific titles and can now be engaged exclusively in scientific projects.

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LINK *Montenegrin Ministry of Education and Science* ▪ <http://www.wbc-inco.net/organisation/88.html>



News from Serbia

Centre for the Promotion of Science – Architectural Competition

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Science and Technological Development Božidar Đelić called on architects from around the globe to participate in the international architectural competition for the future building of the Centre for the Promotion of Science, which was announced on September 15, 2010. Đelić said that this competition would present an unusual facility that could become one of the landmarks of Belgrade, as well as a venue, where elementary school children and students, their parents and teachers had the opportunity to learn about science and technology.



Božidar Đelić called on architects to participate in the architectural competition.

This was the first international architectural competition announced in Serbia after almost 30 years in accordance with the recommendations of UNESCO and in cooperation with the Association of Architects of Serbia, the Belgrade Association of Architects and the International Union of Architects.

The building will cover an area of 10,000 square meters, divided into four main units: an interactive exhibition space, a “Science Club” with laboratories and classrooms, a planetarium and a multi-purpose conference hall. The project centre is closely linked with the project of the Petnica Research Centre and the Centre for Natural Science in Svilajnac.

The project “Centre for the Promotion of Science” is a part of a programme of investments in scientific infrastructure, which is financed by the European Investment Bank. The value of the project amounts to € 20 million, which represents five percent of the total investment programme.

The competition deadline was October 21, 2010. The results will be published on December 17, 2010. The winner’s prize is € 60,000, the second prize winner will receive € 20,000, while the third prize winner will receive € 10,000.

Public Tender for the Position of Director

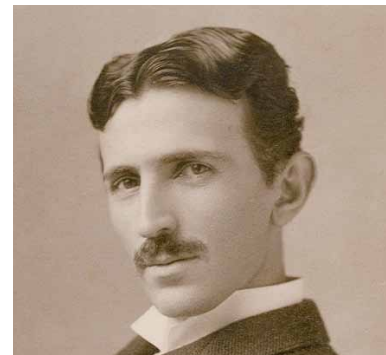
The Minister of Science and Technological Development Božidar Đelić met with the presidents of the boards of scientific organisations to talk about the conditions of the ongoing public competition for the positions of directors in these institutions. Đelić said that in the following month, a public tender for the positions of directors of more than 40 research institutions in the country would be carried out, and added that the scientific community “seeked” for leaders in science – the most ambitious, most professional and talented people would be selected in a democratic ambience.



Participants in the meeting on the public tender for the positions of directors.

Government Declared July 10 the Science Day in Serbia

The day of birth of Nikola Tesla has been declared the Science Day in Serbia. The government made this decision at a meeting on August 26, 2010. The next step was to pass the initiative over to the United Nations to declare it to be an International Science Day.



The day of birth of Nikola Tesla has been declared the Science Day in Serbia.

Serbian-American Scientific Conference in 2011

During a meeting with a delegation of Congressmen of the United States, the Minister for European Integration and Minister of Science and Technological Development Božidar Đelić said that an important step in the improvement of relations between Serbia and the United States had been made with the signing of a bilateral agreement on scientific and technological cooperation in April 2010. In order to enhance the bilateral relations, the Minister announced a big Serbian-American scientific conference in 2011. This is the third delegation of US officials visiting the country since last year’s visit of US Vice President Joseph Biden. The delegation of the United States comprised of the Congressmen Dan Burton, Jeff Flejk, Mike Turner and Steve Cohen.

Scientific Cooperation Between Republika Srpska and Serbia

Božidar Đelić and the Minister of Science and Technology of the Republika Srpska Bakir Ajanović signed a Memorandum of Scientific and Technological Cooperation between the two ministries in Banja Luka.

The Prime Minister of Republika Srpska Milorad Dodik, who attended the ceremony, said that the continued implementation of this Memorandum was in accordance with the policy of the council to implement an agreement on special and parallel relations between Serbia and Republika Srpska, in which it had been agreed that all relevant ministries were to sign Memoranda of cooperation.

Đelić said that it was very important for the two ministries to be part of the relations between the Republika Srpska and Serbia. The future of both republics depended on the ability to retain talented individuals to strengthen the countries’ economic, social, and therefore, political capacity.

The cooperation will be pursued through joint scientific research projects, the exchange of researchers, experts and scientific and technological information, joint use of instruments and equipment, scientific conferences and seminars, the establishment of joint scientific research centers and coordinated activities in the field of national and international programmes for science.

LINK

Serbian Ministry of Science and Technological Development ■
<http://www.wbc-inco.net/organisation/91.html>

20th Anniversary of ASO Ljubljana

The Ljubljana branch office of the Austrian Institute of East and South East European Studies has been established in October 1990 on behalf of the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture to promote the bilateral scientific cooperation between Austria and Slovenia. This fall, it is celebrating its 20th anniversary.

In 1999, the office has been renamed to "Austrian Science and Research Liaison Office Ljubljana". Since 2004, ASO Ljubljana is being coordinated by the Centre for Social Innovation (ZSI) and extended its activities to SEE countries. During the last 20 years, ASO Ljubljana was involved in some historical highlights regarding the promotion of scientific co-operation in WBCs:

- Initiation and co-organisation of the international conference "**Participation of Western Balkan Countries in EU RTD Framework Programmes**" in the European Parliament in February 2005
www.aso.zsi.at/de/slo/veranstaltung/190.html
- International conference "**Why invest in science?**" in cooperation with UNESCO Venice office and the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology of Republic of Slovenia in Ljubljana, September 2006
<http://www.investsciencesee.info/indexconference.html>
- Co-organisation of the international conference "**Contribution of Research and Technology Development (RTD) to Developing Sustainable Knowledge-Based Economies in Central and South East Europe**" Dubrovnik, Croatia, May 22 and 23, 2009
www.investsciencesee.info/dubrovnikprogramme.html



On September 29, ASO Ljubljana celebrated its 20th anniversary of existence at the University of Ljubljana.

On September 29, ASO Ljubljana celebrated its 20th anniversary of existence at the University of Ljubljana with high-level representatives of the Austrian and Slovenian Ministries of Science expressing their great satisfaction with the past and present excellent level of bilateral and multilateral scientific cooperation between both countries. They reiterated the will to continue the successful way of joint efforts towards the promotion of an integration of WBCs into the European Research Area.

AUTHOR Miroslav Polzer ▪ <http://www.wbc-inco.net/users/285.html>

LINK Austrian Science and Research Liaison Office Ljubljana ▪ <http://www.wbc-inco.net/organisation/509.html>

The Centre for Social Innovation – Connecting Research and Application for 20 Years



The WBC-INCO.NET project is coordinated by the Centre for Social Innovation (ZSI), an independent scientific institution based in Vienna, Austria. Established as a private non-profit association under Austrian law in 1990, ZSI has meanwhile become Austria's largest private social science institute with over 60 employees. It is currently involved in 44 projects, and is among the most successful Austrian applicants in the 7th Framework Programme.

"In the beginning, our aim was to develop interesting scientific research with great ambitions. Today, ZSI aims to re-organise research in a new and forward-looking way, but also to expand the current definition of innovation by including the concept of social innovation", the institute's founder and scientific director Prof. Josef Hochgerner explains.

In a nutshell, social innovation denotes new ways to meet social challenges and comprises improvements compared to non-existent or previous solutions. Each of ZSI's three departments focuses on different aspects of social innovation: "Work and Equal Opportunities", "Research Policy and Development" and "Technology and Knowledge". Each one of them connects its scientific basis with practical applications such as education, advisory and networking services, providing an interface across scientific disciplines and sectors.

ZSI's work in transdisciplinary projects is geared towards policies concerning research, technological and social development, innovation processes,

and particularly socio-economic objectives:

- to support a socially, ecologically and economically sustainable development of the information society,
- to facilitate social, cultural and economic integration in Europe,
- to participate in the preparation and implementation of the European Research Area (ERA) and
- to develop infrastructures, effectiveness and internationalisation of social sciences.

Focus on South East Europe

The ZSI coordinates several projects with a focus on South East Europe and especially on the integration of researchers from the WBCs into the ERA, such as SEE-ERA.NET PLUS and WINS-ICT (see pages 14 and 15). It also operates the Austrian Science and Research Liaison Office Ljubljana on behalf of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research (see article above).

LINK Centre for Social Innovation ▪ <http://www.wbc-inco.net/organisation/29.html>



News from Kosovo (under UNSCR 1244)

Calls for Research Funding in Kosovo (under UNSCR 1244)

Following the approval of a five-year Research Programme by the Parliament in July 2010, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) has moved forward with the implementation arrangements. At the end of September, the first round of calls for research funding supporting the implementation of the programme measures was published in the local media.

The total available funding is € 1 million and shall be made available through five programmes: Brain Gain Grant (BGG), Short-Term Mobility Grants, Publication Funds, Special Research Grants and Research Awards.

Applications for the following priority fields of research are eligible for funding:

1. Natural Resources, Energy and Environment
2. Agricultural Production and Food Safety
3. Medical Research
4. Social and Economic Studies
5. Linguistic, Cultural and Historic Studies
6. Cross-Horizontal Research in Information and Communication Technologies

Brain Gain Grant (BGG)

The objective of the Brain Gain Grant is to attract the best Kosovar researchers living abroad and to enable them to pursue professional scientific careers in Kosovo (under UNSCR 1244). The awardees should accomplish the grant through regular work at a public university or a public research institution (i.e. host organisations), where they have to be actively involved in research, teaching and mentoring. They need to be able to lead the selected project autonomously, even before obtaining a tenure position. The host organisation should guarantee that it will employ the candidate after the end of the support provided by the BGG for at least the double duration of the given Brain Gain Programme. Outstanding researchers may apply if they have finished at least a doctorate and if they want to return to Kosovo (under UNSCR 1244). Candidates must have stayed and worked abroad in a dedicated scientific research environment for at least three years after finishing their PhD.

The total amount foreseen for the BGG in 2010 is limited to € 250,000. The total grant for a project for one year cannot top the amount of € 70,000. Only in duly justified cases extra additional top-up funding of a maximum of € 30,000 per year can be exceptionally granted for research equipment or personnel costs for further team members. Proposed projects have to last for a minimum period of 12 months and a maximum of 24 months.

Short-Term Mobility Grants

This programme aims to enable scientists to work at universities or reputed research institutions abroad, with the purpose of gaining research experience. Furthermore, Kosovar scientists shall be enabled to participate in scientific conferences to present their own research results abroad. The maximum amount will be € 1,500. In case of a two months' stay, the grant can be extended to € 3,000 for the entire period.

Publication Funds

This programme provides funds for the production costs to support the publication of scientific, non-profit oriented research findings and the translation of relevant international scientific publications into Albanian or Serbian language.

Only publications of excellent scientific quality, which anticipate a significant enhancement of scientific knowledge and a further advancement of research in the framework of the respective specialist area in an international context shall be funded or translated. The maximum support for the production of a publication amounts to € 6,000. In exceptional cases, this amount can be raised up to € 10,000. The maximum level of support for the translation of a scientific publication amounts to € 10,000, and only in duly justified cases it can be extended to a maximum subsidy of € 12,000.

Special Research Grant

The objective of the Special Research Grant is the establishment of a research programme based on international standards through autonomous research concentration at a single research institution/university location. The projects funded by the Special Research Grant must be unique and with a long-lasting perspective. They should have an added value compared to small sized research projects through the establishment of programmatic research endeavours.

The grant is aimed at researchers from Kosovo (under UNSCR 1244) working together in research projects. The awardees should accomplish the grant through regular work at a public university or a public research institution, where they have to be actively involved in research, teaching and mentoring. The total funding available for 2010 is € 625,000. The grant for a single project cannot be higher than € 125,000.

Awards

The Research Programme established a fund for yearly awards for extraordinary achievements with the aim to promote scientific excellence, to encourage science careers and to recognise the efforts and commitment of those researchers, who are advancing in their area of expertise.

The award "Kosovar Researchers of the Year" annually will be given to the five most outstanding researchers in Kosovo (under UNSCR 1244). Each of them will receive a prize money of up to € 6,000 to support the continuation of their research career and to enable them to build up or consolidate and lead research groups. The award "Best newcomer researchers of the Year" will be given to the best five newcomer researchers with a prize money of up to € 2,000.

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LINK Kosovar Education Center ■ <http://www.wbc-inco.net/organisation/2777.html>

The RCC Strategy and Work Programme (2011–2013)



The RCC Strategy and Work Programme 2011–2013, endorsed on June 23, 2010 in Istanbul by the Heads of State and Government of the South East European Cooperation Process (SEECP), has been designed to respond to the needs of the region and to add value to the cooperation in South East Europe in the areas of joint interest.

The areas of interest include economic and social development, infrastructure and energy, justice and home affairs, security cooperation, building human capital and parliamentary cooperation.

The strategy was prepared in close cooperation with the European Commission and 45 other RCC members. It sets the RCC Secretariat's course of action for the next three years.

In the field of Building Human Capital, the RCC Secretariat has played a key role in the development and promotion of important regional projects. Activities of the RCC Secretariat resulted in the creation of project fiches and the establishment of regional bodies, which will implement project activities, as well as in obtaining funds for the realisation of project activities of related EU programmes.

The 2011–2013 priorities in this sector include:

1. Ljubljana Process: the RCC will take on the role of the coordinator in the new phase of the Ljubljana Process after 2010 (Ljubljana Process II), a project aiming to rehabilitate cultural sites throughout the region. A Task Force on Culture and Society will be established by the RCC, and a permanent secretariat will be appointed by the RCC in cooperation with the Council of Europe and the European Commission, in order to undertake the Ljubljana Process management and fund-raising activities as a counterpart of the national task

forces, which will be created in each country of the region. The project amounts to € 1.6 million. Its implementation will start in January 2011.

2. Higher education reform: A steering group for guiding and monitoring the progress of the higher education structural reform will be established under the RCC umbrella. These activities will be realised in coordination with other regional and European initiatives. The project amounts to € 800,000. Its implementation will start in November 2010.

3. Development of a Regional Strategy for Research and Development for Innovation for the Western Balkans: The aim is to develop a comprehensive regional research strategy with an emphasis on identifying existing research capacities and considering how networking and interconnections can be established or improved among Western Balkans institutes and researchers. It will channel their work towards the establishment of benchmarks for research and innovation systems and cooperation at the regional level, as well as explore possibilities to finance such regional initiatives, including initiatives by the business sector. The project amounts to € 1.5 million. Implementation will start in November 2011.

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LINK Regional Cooperation Council ▪ <http://www.wbc-inco.net/organisation/16063.html>

WINS-ICT: An Autumn Plenty of Opportunities



WINS-ICT used the autumn intensely to promote the existing and future cooperation opportunities with the WBCs in science and research and engage in different activities to foster research partnerships between the WBCs and the EU.

The WINS-ICT project team has recently come back from the eChallenges e-2010 event, where it has successfully promoted the existing cooperation opportunities with WBCs and also organised two networking and brokerage events, together with its sister project ICT-WEB-PROMS and the well known IDEAL-IST, to foster the creation of new WBC – EU research partnerships.

In September, the project actively participated in the ICT 2010 conference and exhibition, where its networking session allowed for face-to-face meetings with ICT stakeholders from Eastern European and Central Asian countries thanks to the synergy created with IncoNet EECA and other support actions. This event, with more than 140 participants and the award ceremony of the six winners of the ICT idea competition by ICT-WEB-PROMS, was particularly successful.

WINS-ICT has also been coaching some of the most promising WBC researchers as to their project ideas and proposals. Finally, to continue to create project capacities in the WB region, it has supported the organisation of an ICT NCP Info Day in Belgrade as well as of the 3rd SEE ICT Forum Board Meeting and

7th MASIT Open Days Conference in Ohrid, FYR of Macedonia, by organising a training session focused on the new ICT work programme and Call 7.

The efforts of the project team are now fully dedicated to the upcoming "Forum on Research for Innovation in ICT for the Western Balkan countries". It will be held in Belgrade on November 30 and will see the participation of representatives and high officials from ministries and public agencies dealing with the information and communication technologies as well as leading researchers and experts from academia and industry from the WBCs and EU Member States. The ambition is that the ICT Forum would eventually contribute to drive forward the political agenda for ICT research in terms of intra-regional cooperation for a greater WBC integration into the European Research Area.

AUTHOR Désirée Pecarz ▪ <http://www.wbc-inco.net/users/1211.html>

LINK Western Balkan countries INCO-NET Support in the Field of ICT (WINS-ICT) ▪ <http://www.wbc-inco.net/organisation/43674.html>



Conclusions from the First 18 Months of SEE-ERA.NET PLUS

With the acceptance of the proposed funding list by the European Commission (EC), a key-milestone of the project was reached during August 2010, following 18 months of intensive work. The acceptance of the funding list for Joint European Research Projects (JERPs) was prepared in several phases and conclusions can be drawn from the experience gained.

SEE-ERA.NET PLUS (FP7) is based on the forerunner project SEE-ERA.NET (FP6). By joining forces and by pooling financial resources, the project consortium enhances the coordination of bilateral R&D cooperation with the WBCs and the EU. It involves 17 R&D programme owners as well as ministries or agencies from 14 countries, including EU Member States, Associated Countries and all WBCs.

SEE-ERA.NET PLUS supports the integration of bilateral RTD initiatives into multilateral, jointly agreed activities with an impact on strategic priorities at European level and makes more resources available than it would have been possible via bilateral cooperation agreements. Strengthening research communities in new Member States and WBCs and preparing them for a participation in FP7 is of key importance.



The Steering Board of SEE-ERA.NET PLUS

The project coordinates national R&D funds and launched a call for Joint European Research Projects with a budget of about € 3.5 million. This is the largest amount dedicated to one call for SEE including all the WBCs. The figure of € 2,675,000 shows the national commitment to the project. External evaluators and a Scientific Council assist the selection based on scientific excellence.

Expected Impact and Results

The project further integrates the WBCs and their key research communities into the ERA by means of joint work in the funded projects. It engages scientists and key actors in R&D policy making in the broad SEE-ERA.NET PLUS consortium. The result is a significant European added value in many aspects.

During the first 18 months of the project the work performed involved three work packages:

WP1 – Preparing the call

There was a consensual agreement on all formal steps and call documents. The consensus on the concept and the procedures of the single joint call was followed by signing an “Implementation Agreement on the execution of the SEE-ERA.NET PLUS Joint Call”. The scope of the call was defined and a call text was finalised.

WP2 – Implementing the call and monitoring

The call was launched on September 1, 2009. The second stage started on January 15, 2010. A pool of 1,400 distinguished external evaluators was available for the remote evaluation in two stages, at the first stage two external evaluators and at the full proposal stage three external evaluators were consulted. A Scientific Council for SEE-ERA.NET PLUS composed of eminent scientists from the participating countries was set up in order to provide support and guarantee scientific excellence concerning the evaluation and selection procedure. Its work resulted in a ranking list. The Steering Board agreed on a funding list, mobilising additional funding of € 208,600 from Croatia, France and Serbia. The selection procedure followed the final ranking list of projects established by the Scientific Council in June 2010 in

Sofia. After a consultation process during the summer, SEE-ERA.NET PLUS decided to fund 23 projects, applying a reduction rate for partners in selected projects coming from countries overspending their national contribution. The funding list was updated during July 2010 and accepted by the EC in August 2010. The decision of the Steering Board is very positive, as a maximum of JERPs and involved partners will be funded. Following this approach, funding of JERPs with € 3,050,000 is possible. Nevertheless, due to the specific eligibility criteria, some of the allocated national contributions will remain unspent. The monitoring process for funded projects was drafted during the Steering Board meeting in Belgrade.

WP3 – Management and Dissemination

The starting point was the partner's formal agreement on the established governance structure and workflow. Steering Board meetings were organised. The call was advertised by several dissemination activities, e.g. the established NCP network, its relevant contacts and websites, the project website, websites of consortium members and via CORDIS as well as by sending information to applicants to the SEE-ERA.NET Pilot Joint Call and to scientists from databases of the consortium partners. Moreover, eNewsletters and scientific fora with the topic of S&T in the WBC as well as presentations by the NCP network addressed directly at the concerned researchers in several countries supported the dissemination of the call.

Outlook on Further Activities of SEE-ERA.NET PLUS

All JERPs have signed funding contracts and interim monitoring activities are going to be organised during October 2011. Boundaries for the impact analysis of the call were set at the Steering Board Meeting in Belgrade. During the first half of 2011, the Steering Board of SEE-ERA.NET PLUS will meet to identify further steps for the sustainability of the project, as formally the end of the project will be January 2013.

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LINK SEE-ERA.NET PLUS ■ <http://www.wbc-inco.net/organisation/44489.html>

The Impact of Publicly Funded Research on Innovation



This PRO INNO Europe study assesses the impact of publicly funded research on innovation. It focuses on the interface between research, technological advancement and innovation. Special emphasis is placed on the role of the collaborative R&D projects, funded by FP5 and FP6 in promoting innovation, and on the innovation output of the European Framework Programmes.

LINK

Download the analysis at ■
<http://www.wbc-inco.net/object/document/79921.html>

Quick Guide to EU Funds



This Quick Guide to EU Funds, edited by Europa Media Trainings, presents the EU's most prominent research funding opportunities, such as FP7 and CIP, as well as a large number of other community programmes and funding instruments in an easily accessible format. Each chapter contains information on the programme's objectives, supported actions, project implementation and eligible countries as well as links to the respective programme websites.

LINK

Download the Quick Guide at ■
<http://www.wbc-inco.net/object/document/91594.html>

EVENT ANNOUNCEMENTS

4th International Conference for Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Regional Development

ICEIRD 2011 will take place from May 5 to 7, 2011 in Ohrid, FYR of Macedonia under the motto "Through Entrepreneurial Learning to innovation and Regional Development". The objective of the Conference is to gather governmental decision makers, scientists from different institutional backgrounds and practitioners in order to discuss this topic of crucial importance for national competitiveness and increased regional development.

LINK

Read the full event announcement at ■
<http://www.wbc-inco.net/object/calendar/93986.html>

International Congress on Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy Sources for SEE

This congress, taking place on April 6 to 8, 2011 in Sofia, will present the European EE & RES knowledge and experience and offer a platform for dialogue and business contacts. It will combine scientific and industrial issues, providing the industry professionals with the latest technologies, strategies and best practices. The event will offer a wide range of interactive features such as presentations, discussions, workshops, networking, match-making session and an international exhibition.

LINK

Read the full event announcement at ■
<http://www.wbc-inco.net/object/calendar/93256.html>

The EU 2020 Strategy

In March 2010, the European Commission has officially launched the "Europe 2020 Strategy" to overcome the current crisis and prepare the EU's economy for the next decade. The successor to the Lisbon Strategy identifies three main drivers for growth to be implemented through concrete actions at EU and national levels: smart growth, sustainable growth and inclusive growth. The key documents on the strategy are available on the WBC-INCO.NET website.

LINKS

Download the Communication by the European Commission on the Europe 2020 Strategy at ■
<http://www.wbc-inco.net/object/document/81914.html>
 Download the strategy's adopted version at ■
<http://www.wbc-inco.net/object/document/92160.html>

Imprint



WBC-INCO.NET is co-funded under the 7th Framework Programme for RTD under the Capacities Programme – International Cooperation (Grant Agreement Number: 212029).

The sole responsibility for the content of this eJournal lies with the authors. It does not represent the opinion of the European Community or the editors of the journal. Neither the European Community nor the editors are responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

ISSN: 1991-1750

Subscription & recent issues available at

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