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RESEARCH DIRECTORATE-
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MINISTRY
OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE OF
MONTENEGRO



BELGIAN PRESIDENCY

**MINUTES
OF
THE MEETING OF STEERING PLATFORM ON RESEARCH FOR
WESTERN BALKAN COUNTRIES**

November 11, 2010

Bečići (Budva), Montenegro

Organiser of the Conference: the Ministry of Education and Science of Montenegro

Venue: Hotel `Queen of Montenegro` - Bečići

MINUTES:

The meeting was co chaired by:

- Belgium, as EU presidency (Ms. Caroline MANCEL)
- Montenegro, as WBC (Mr. Igor RADUSINOVIĆ)
- European Commission (Mr. Alessandro DAMIANI)

N.b.: Presentations are uploaded at

<http://www.wbc-inco.net/object/calendar/95585.html>

Progress Reports are uploaded at

<http://wbc-inco.net/object/document/97267.html>

1. Welcome and opening statements:

Mr. Igor RADUSINOVIĆ opened the conference, welcoming all the participants and introducing **Ms. MANCEL** as the representative of the current EU presidency, giving her the floor.

Ms. Caroline MANCEL presented the work of the BE presidency in the field of research.

One of the priorities is simplification of FP7, and a lot of work has already been put into this by adopting Council conclusions at first Competitiveness Council for Research.

There are several points which require an adaptation of either the financial regulation and-or the rules of participation – these measures will require more time, as they are submitted to the co-decision procedure.

Also, first suggestions for the next FP were made, and first Communication on it issued. Now the process of consultation and inputs lies ahead. An informal ministerial group composed of three countries, besides Belgium, namely France, Sweden and Hungary, which will continue to monitor the progress made in this field by all stakeholders involved. They will draft a first intermediary report by end of November, to be presented at the second Competitiveness Council, followed by a second report under HU Presidency.

Mr. Alessandro DAMIANI from the **European Commission** thanked the hosts of the meeting – Montenegro.

His opening remarks referred to preparation that had started on the future Research Framework Programme (“FP8”?), and its structure and focus, mentioning that innovation will be given strong emphasis and research cooperation will have to address the grand societal challenges. Cooperation with the third countries will be an important and integrated part of the programme.

He suggested that the Balkan countries (collectively and/or individually) should take the opportunity to express their expectations on the next framework programme. More synergy between the FP and structural funds, and hopefully IPA, can also be expected.

Referring to the Progress Reports presented by the Commission he congratulated Montenegro in particular for the progress achieved and hoped that the Council in December will bring Montenegro one step closer in the accession process. This would, however, require further efforts from Montenegro and all Balkans on research policy as well.

Mr. Igor RADUSINOVIĆ, Deputy Minister for Science – Montenegro, first welcomed the participants of the 9th Steering Platform meeting, expressing at the same time the pleasure of hosting this event. He went on to mention the recommendation of the EC to the Council for granting Candidate Status to Montenegro and the positive statement of the EC in the view of the S&T administrative capacities in Montenegro which is of specific importance. He also pointed out that the EC comments were being analyzed, and the government would try to respond to them. Integration provided a good framework for future developments.

Next, he underlined the importance of the Steering Platform as a source of good guidance towards RTD integration, mainly through providing information on initiatives and programmes. In the moment when the Ministry of Finance is designing future financial plans of the country, the Ministry of Education and Science found it crucial to prove how research was important for economy, actual cooperation with business level of knowledge transfer, and measures that exist and ones that should be introduced. He concluded this part with emphasizing the importance of RTD in economy, and necessity of being open, mobile, creative and effective.

Furthermore, he pointed out that, in order to meet the requirements of the new EU strategy by 2020, countries of WBC should also adjust their policies and he also underlined the significance of WBC initiatives, including the Steering Platform in this process. Participation in ERA bodies was another important point.

Radusinovic informed about the completion of the study `Montenegro in 21st Century` carried out by Montenegrin Academy of Sciences and Arts, where `innovation`, `innovation culture`, `innovation economy` are key words. The Ministry considered poor recognition of excellence and quality as a weakest point in its policy. Consequently, the new Law on RTD recognizes Centres of Excellence. Emphasis should be put on connection with business. Also, this will be a specific requirement in new calls of the Ministry. In addition, Directorate for Development of SMEs – DDSME, through the SME strategy foresaw the connection of the two sectors. So, for the Ministry, it would be valuable to hear at the meeting of the initiatives and instruments that facilitate and exploit these connections.

The introductory addresses were followed by a brief round of *discussion and comments*, especially in the expected direction of FP8 and specific possibilities for WBC, and also if similar possibilities will occur during the second half of the ongoing Framework Programme.

Mr. DAMIANI explained that it was too early to say but that we would pass on the message that there was a high expectation and real demand for capacity building support.

This statement was welcomed by the WBC.

Mr. Viktor NEDOVIĆ from the Serbian Ministry of Science agreed with the opinion and message passed by Montenegrin colleagues. In addition, he asked the EC if it would be welcomed if the WBCs make a joint position paper on FP8, concerning the

issues mentioned, and how EC would accept it, or if it would be better if separate ones were made.

EC responded that position papers received from countries and different bodies are welcome, and that some had already been received. The 1st orientation paper should be issued soon and the formal consultation procedure (Green Paper) was foreseen for February 2011.

Ms. Lora PAVLOVA from the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science explained, as a support and encouragement to what had been said, that new Member States had currently been preparing the position on FP8, since common papers are generally better accepted. In her opinion, common WBC or Steering Platform paper would have an increased impact.

2 Approval of the Agenda; Approval of the Minutes of the last Steering Platform Meeting (Belgrade, 24 June 2010)

The Agenda of the meeting was approved.

Approval of the Minutes from the previous meeting was also done, with two additional comments being taken into consideration, as explained by Ms. Zeljka DUKIC from the Serbian Ministry: one from Slovenia, regarding the Slovenian research programme until 2015, as it was mentioned in the minutes. It should be clarified that the mentioned programme is national, and for the period 2011-2020; 2nd comment came from Germany, they asked for adding a sentence that both networking projects play important role in integration of the WBC.

3 Stocktaking on implementation Conclusions Steering Platform meeting in Belgrade (WBC-INCO.NET)

Before moving to new presentations, **Mr. NEDOVIĆ** gave the follow-up based on the conclusions of the Belgrade meeting, which was the first time it was done. Since the focus of the activities had been moving more on innovation, a lot was done in the meantime:

- establishment and start of the `enhanced` WBC-INCO.NET. In that frame, the first innovation dialogue forum was held as part of the series of Bečići meetings. The Dialogue was a good opportunity to discuss and hear a lot of good initiatives. Also, the Platform meeting agenda had innovation and involvement of SMEs as main topics.
- Next issue was strengthening research capacities and IPA. At this stage it is too early to say if there had been any improvements in the past six months, since there was still no precise information on extent of using IPA for research purposes. Same could be said for SMEs and industry involvement. Hope was expressed that some data will be seen later on.
- REGPOT and dedicated calls: in addition to what was said earlier at the meeting, a kind of positive message was passed from the Commission.
- Regional strategy on RTDI – through communication with RCC, the last news was that this project would be implemented beginning 2011.
- Involvement of CEI in the future activities: having their representative at the meeting indicated the positive developments in that direction.

- Next: ESFRI and WBC involvement: representatives of Albania, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia take part, but no nominations for the WG on regional issues so far – this should be done in the near future.
- Heribert Buchbauer will say more on new way of functioning of SP.

4 Presentation of recent developments regarding S&T cooperation in/with the WBCs

(Detailed account on what has been done in this respect can be found at: <http://wbc-inco.net/object/document/97267.html>)

Ms. Tania FRIEDERICHS (also speaking on behalf of JRC who could not attend) outlined briefly the actions undertaken by the JRC on Balkans. The activities were similar to those of DG RTD, which was seen a confirmation of the clear tendency that both DGs should work more in synergy. JRC held an Info Day in Skopje, where DG RTD also participated. It was important and interesting, focusing on follow up of research opportunities. IPTS from Seville will help FYR of Macedonia in preparation of the follow up of the strategy. First meeting of the Joint Committee of Albania and EC was held. What was also noticeable is that the WB targeted activities were continuously reducing, due to the fact that they were all associated, so the activities had been done in broader sense of integration of these countries to EU. WBC should learn from EU countries and strengthen administrative capacities, and enhance national strategies, especially by adding innovation to them. At the time, the EC was preparing a questionnaire to prepare EU opinion on compliance with *acquis* by Serbia. In terms of the future work, the focus will be the synergy of FP7, IPA and structural funds.

4.1 WBC presentations

The round of the presentations from the region started with **Albanian** report. The participants heard that RTD programming on key priorities was continued, focusing, among others, on support to young researchers, cooperation of the Ministry and the Agency for Research, Technological Development and Innovation (ARTI). Further efforts had been made on the enhancement of investment to research from business and other partners, increasing participation in programmes for RTD and funding of excellence. The new Agency (ARTI) was launched and became fully operational. All the funds are allocated by the agency. Albania increased its participation in COST and EUREKA. When it comes to structural changes, new units for control of accreditation of HEI were established. In the legal framework, amendments to the Law on Higher Education were introduced, giving more possibilities to the universities to increase RTD activities. The NCP network continued actively with its activities and, as an important event in the respect of the development of the capacities, a visit to TUBITAK was mentioned. A workshop on COST was held on 2nd November, aimed at encouraging participation. Intention to become a full member of COST was expressed. In the area of bilateral cooperation a new agreement with Austria was under preparation and meetings with Slovenia were held, the Joint commission for economic cooperation (including higher education and RTD) met. Also, a cooperation agreement with Slovenia regarding statistics was signed. Albania increased its participation in Erasmus Mundus and Tempus programmes (it is participating so far

in 140 projects in Tempus). Coming to the human resources for research, it was mentioned that there had been no increase in the number of PhD students, which gives importance to this capacity building of researchers and academics. New programmes with WB to increase the laboratories and scientific infrastructure in universities started. Albania will introduce a university ranking in order to increase the quality of RTD. Also, a reform of higher education and science financing was announced.

Ms. Alma HASANOVIĆ from **Bosnia and Herzegovina** reported on the activities carried out between July and October. In September, the 2nd call for preparation of FP7 projects was launched and the selection was underway. Beginning in early 2011, the implementation of the IPA project on strengthening capacities of three research centres, including purchasing of equipment will start. Within the Regional Competitiveness Initiative, led and supported by the OECD, the Ministry of Civil Affairs submitted a triple helix project proposal, with negotiation in process. They would try to decide on the best way of knowledge transfer and define a model to work for future, especially in improving the business investment. Regarding the legal framework, new documents were being adopted, namely guidelines setting standards for other public administration bodies on how to treat scientific activities. Speaking of the dedicated events, she mentioned a seminar on FP7, COST and EUREKA organized by the Spanish Ministry of Research and Innovation, then few call dedicated Info Days, for specific themes, regional training courses within project capacity building. Furthermore, BiH published its ERAWATCH profile, including mapping of science, technology and innovation policy.

Next to present recent developments was **Croatia**, **Mr. Damir JELIČIĆ** said that the focus in the previous period was on IPA realization in all components, and trying to increase participation in FP7 and other initiatives. Regarding bilateral agreements, the one with Montenegro was about to start with concrete implementation activities. He then focused on the figures regarding FP7, pointing out they may be interesting for other WBC, providing cumulative numbers for October 2010, when Croatia had 108 contracts with 137 partners from this country participating. (Total value: 24mil eur; 60% are in Cooperation; 36% in Capacities and 4% in People; 0% in Ideas. Coming to geographical coverage, 80% participants are from Zagreb; Rijeka – 8%, Split – 4% and all others – 8. 40% of the participants are from the universities, less than 20% are from institutes, and about 22% from enterprises 12% from governmental bodies (ministries, cities, counties), 8% - other). This had brought series of questions and issues, valid for all WBCs, on the quality of proposers and proposals and ways of involvement in the first place (mostly through personal initiatives). He pointed out that there may be no concrete logistic support. He pointed out that co-financing was the main problem of all WBC, due to lack of adequate national funds and the fact that the last payment from the Commission is coming long after completion of the projects.

In the case of the **Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**, the distribution of participation FP7 is similar as in Croatia, but the figures are approximately half of the mentioned (48 projects, most in Cooperation, very few in Marie Curie and none in Ideas). At the moment, the implementation of the national strategy was ongoing, with expected assistance from JRC in improving it. The Law on Establishment of the National Agency on Nuclear Technology was adopted. Moving to events and awareness raising and support campaign, the first one mentioned was an Info Day

organized with JRC, with large interest for participation, and, hopefully, leading to more concrete results. They held a launch day of all FP7 calls with all NCPs, which was also well attended. Other information activities were going on, since there are a lot of foundations, agencies active; different conferences, meetings within ongoing projects also involve NCPs with efforts made to cover the whole country. Macedonian researchers had been participating in three EUREKA projects, in 25 COST actions (since January); UNESCO provided support to 3 scientific projects. It was also reported that new agreement with Montenegro was signed, and under procedure had been agreements with Israel, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and others. In boosting absorption of the available funds, the plans would be to focus on fostering SMEs participation, with several info events planned for November and December that should focus not only on FP, but also IPA and other programmes.

Apart from the previously mentioned news in the EU integration process of the country, developments in **Montenegro** in the previous period were focused first of all on normative developments, as presented by **Ms. Branka ŽIŽIĆ**. The new Law on RTD should be adopted by the end of November, recognizing centres of excellence and providing legal basis for boosting the implementation of the Strategy. The Ministry of Education and Science organized three Info Days in the period June-November, related to FP7 and combining information on other international programmes such as COST and NATO SPS. The Second Researchers' Night was held on September 24. Montenegro and Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia signed the bilateral agreement on scientific and technological cooperation and the Call within the bilateral cooperation agreement with the Republic of Croatia was published, with 12 projects positively evaluated. The Ministry of Education and Science had also taken actions to stimulate cooperation within the framework of COST. The Ministry has adopted an action plan on joining COST and prepared a handbook with detailed procedures for joining the actions. Two Info Days were organized where COST was promoted, one in June, and the second, with participants from COST, in October in Podgorica. The Ministry had nominated representatives in ERA committees: The Strategic Forum for International Scientific-Technological Cooperation and Steering Group for Human Resources and Mobility and changed several representatives in Programme Committees, as well as National Contact Points for Seventh Framework Programme.

Mr. Viktor NEDOVIĆ gave account on the activities that took place in **Serbia** between the two Platform meetings. A new body was established, a limited liability company for managing RTD projects. Serbia had recently launched an architectural competition for the center of promotion of science, as an activity planned by the RTD Strategy. The call was closed on Sept. 15 and evaluation was underway. The efforts of the Government are not aimed only at having new institutions, but future science landmarks as well. The estimated value is 20 million euro. Another initiative was launched that very week, for development of a center for materials and nanosciences, worth 24 million euro. In this centre, a laboratory for fabrication and characterization of nano materials will be established and will be used as a shared facility – capital equipment for all in the field. In the legislation area, a few laws on intellectual property were adopted. In the awareness raising and capacity building activities, the efforts had been made to work jointly with the Europe Enterprise Network. In order to make it functional and sustainable, the Joint Action Plan was drafted, planning, among other, joint meetings for FP7 and CIP opportunities for

research and business communities. Several info and consultation sessions had already been held in Belgrade, Novi Sad, Niš and Kragujevac. Continuation of the best technology competition was expected (20million of dinars for awards and prizes), the aim of which is to promote enterprise spirit among researchers. The Bureau of International Projects organised trainings of young researchers, focusing on academic research skills (skills for international research career and take more active part in initiatives). A number of thematic info sessions were organized as well, covering Health, Agriculture, ICT, and Energy. Serbia became a member of the European Patent Organisation on Oct 1. New bilateral agreements were signed with the following countries: Austria (13 July), Republic of Srpska (14 September) and Egypt (8 November); several bilateral calls were published: with Portugal, Spain, Belarus, and Greece. There was huge interest for the last one, resulting in almost 150 proposals. The Academy of Science signed on October 5 an agreement with Slovenia, in the fields of chemistry, medicine and social sciences. As for the FP7 participation, the situation was similar to one in Croatia, with problems and issues more or less similar as well. In the recently closed SEE-ERA.NET+, 18 out of 23 approved projects were with Serbian participation. Also, in EUREKA there were 9 new projects, and with total number of 84, Serbia is the leader in the region; Serbia had been participating in 123 COST actions. He announced a high level forum on ICT in the WBC organised jointly with DG INFSO and Ministry of Telecommunications, scheduled for November 30. The realization of the new 4-year national project cycle in basic, applied and interdisciplinary integrated research will start. He pointed out that many of the colleagues present were actually involved in the support of the national activities.

4.2 Steering Platform members: EU Member States and countries associated to FP7

Mr. Heribert BUCHBAUER opened the second round of presentations, speaking on behalf of **Austria**. Firstly, as the leader of the WBC-INCO.NET WP1 that provides support to the Platform meetings, he expressed his satisfaction with so many visible improvements and developments. He went on to explain that, as one of the conclusions of Belgrade meeting, it was agreed that the mechanisms and setting of the Steering platform meetings should be improved, and that the agenda should be more focused. Feedback was asked from all, but, unfortunately, there were only few comments. Next, the practice of presenting follow-up between two meetings was introduced. As for the country progress, he pointed out that WBC have been among the BMWF's top priority cooperation regions for years, and will continue to be in future. Austrian organizations, researchers and research managers organized and participated in many events in and for the region, especially FFG and ZSI are very active. ASO Ljubljana celebrated its 20th anniversary at the end of September, in cooperation with the Slovenian Science Ministry. Concerning bilateral cooperation, efforts to enlarge the network of bilateral cooperation agreements had continued, especially with Albania, Montenegro and Serbia, where the implementation of the agreements was underway. The country reconfirmed its commitment to the region through its activities in SEE-ERA.NET+ and WBC-INCO.NET projects, co-chairing RCC TF BHC and other initiatives.

The account on **Bulgarian** activities was given by **Ms. Lora PAVLOVA**. She reported that there had been no new developments, and that the stress was put more on regional initiatives and pointed out their activities in RCC, the new Action Plan of which identified activities for the region. The Danube Strategy initiative and the recently adopted Declaration of the head of states in Bucharest focused on key areas such as energy; transport; competitiveness and education. It had been forwarded to the Danube region countries, non EU Members states and namely: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia; Republic of Moldova; Serbia and Ukraine for comments. In international cooperation, even though there had been no new S&T agreements, positive replies were received from Albania and Montenegro, and the agreements should hopefully be in place within the next six months. The Ministry offers special support scheme for the participation of Bulgarian consortia in FP7 – a special cost line to invite counterparts from WBC for joint consortia, and she used the opportunity to appeal to WBC to inform their respective research communities. Bulgaria signed EUREKA and EUROSTAR initiatives.

The round of Steering Platform members was continued by brief presentation of **Mr. Jan HRUŠÁK** from Academy of Sciences of the **Czech Republic**, who underlined that the situation in his country had become complicated in the field of research policies, due to the outcomes of the elections. However, Working Groups at the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MEYS) prepared inputs for an integrated approach for a national position on the next FP. The process was rather similar to that of the creation of national roadmap of research infrastructures. The document was approved by the Council of ERA (MEYS), a first draft was prepared and an outline submitted to the Commission.

Ms. Karin WEDDE-MUEHLHAUSEN from the **German** PT-DLR explained that the framework for international cooperation is set in the Federal Government's Internationalization Strategy. In this context, the BMBF Programme "International Cooperation in Education and Research - Central, Eastern and South Eastern European Region (Regional Call for Proposals)" is making an important contribution to reaching these aims and had been prolonged and is ongoing until December 31, 2013. Funds are being made available for preparatory projects of German applicants with partners from South East Europe in the field of applied research, development and education in order to support project applications under current BMBF funding programmes, the Seventh Research Framework Programme and other EU programmes that are relevant to research, and the Eurostars Programme. It is an open format call where the countries of the region are invited to co-finance the projects from their side.

Within the initiative on research marketing in the region, funded by the German Government, a possibility had been provided to German competence centers to work with the region. In the last round of proposals there was one with participation from Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as two with Croatian institutions (the one on virtual institute in marine biology was mentioned as a good example of linkage between higher education, research and business, involving two small scale biotech companies from Croatia). Germany continued with the activities within WBC-INCO.NET and SEE-ERA.NET+, in the latter one as the administrator of the recent call, where contracts had been negotiated and set up.

For **Greece**, **Ms. Kelly VAVASI** first emphasized the huge participation of Greek researchers in the bilateral call with Serbia. In FP7, Greece had been active in several projects involving the WBC region, dealing mostly with the promotion of young researchers' mobility, the connections between industry and academia, and the development of the e-infrastructures (i.e. in SEE ERA-EI the focus had been on identifying challenges, publishing a regional pilot call, exploring the establishment of funding modules, developing resp. papers for e-infrastructure in SEE accordingly). The country had been leading some of the new activities for enhancing the innovation in the region (see the new WP8 "Innovation Support" in WBC-INCO.NET). Furthermore, Greece continues to be strongly involved in the on-going activities of the WBC-INCO.NET and SEE-ERA.NET+ projects. By the end of 2010 a bilateral call with Albania should be launched.

Mr. Béla KARDON just pointed out that he was not in position to speak on behalf of the **Hungarian** Government as he is not a Ministry representative.

Country news presentations were continued with the brief from **Slovenia**. **Ms. Slavi KRUŠIČ** introduced that in the field of policy development a research and innovation strategy until 2020 had been under preparation and in the discussion phase. It supports a new concept of bilateral cooperation which will replace the concept of pure mobility; cooperation with WBC still being one of the priorities. Programmes within bilateral cooperation with WBC are ongoing, with new calls expected at the beginning of 2011. Slovenia became a member of OECD in July 2010.

The **Turkish** progress report was presented by **Mr. Mehmet GÖKGÖZ**. Between the two Platform meetings, there had been several activities: training visits in Albania (on FP7) had been organized, and another one is scheduled for December 2010, dedicated to FP7 Marie Curie. Within WBC-INCO.NET, a brokerage event was organized on June 18 (60 participants and 18 presentations). In the frame of WINS-ICT Project, TUBITAK has provided trainings to WBC researchers in the framework of two Brokerage Events. In the ICT2010 Conference, a brokerage event was held in Brussels on 28 September 2010. In the eChallenges 2010 Conference, a brokerage event will be held on 28 October 2010 in Warsaw. As for the plans for the following period, several protocols or memoranda for cooperation shall hopefully be signed: TUBITAK with FYR of Macedonia, Kosovo (UN Res. 1244), a draft with Bosnia and Herzegovina had been prepared, with Albania, a call had been under preparation. Turkey had also been proposing cooperation with other WB Countries, namely with Croatia and Montenegro.

Ms. Evelyne GLATTLI mentioned the **Swiss SCOPES** Programme and its latest developments. The current round of programme started in 2009, lasting until 2012. 1st call was published in 2009, with 71 applications approved. WBCs participate in 20 projects with 40 research teams. The 2nd call had been launched and WBC were asked to convey the message to their respective research communities, with special emphasis on the fact that no co-financing is needed.

4.3 Representatives from WBC-INCO.NET, SEE-ERA.NET PLUS, COST, RCC and EUREKA

Ms. Eike DALL on behalf of the **WBC-INCO.NET** gave an update on the project: based on the calls of proposals in INCO, an enhancement towards innovation was accepted. The consortium included the innovation focus in the existing tasks until 2013 and created a new Work Package with focus on the analysis of innovation needs and stakeholders, exchange of good practice and development of action plans. The consortium was enlarged with 3 new participants (ministries in charge of economy in Albania and FYR of Macedonia, and Directorate for Development of SMEs in Montenegro). Launching event and 1st dialogue meeting took place in Bečići. Further activities are planned to support regional dialogue, focusing on human resources development, to which aim cooperation with OECD and IPA projects can and will be exploited. Regarding dissemination within the project, she pointed out its importance, since it was aimed to reach directly researchers 'on the ground', and at the moment the newsletter had more than 7000 recipients.

Mr. Martin Felix GAJDUSEK gave a presentation of the results of the **SEE-ERA.NET PLUS** call. He explained the procedure, timeline and principles of the Call, including funding, mentioning that the final number of the approved projects was 23. He also provided the statistical data of the Call, reflecting the country-by-country ratio of EC and national funding, number of partners per project, distribution of partners and coordinators among the countries. In the end, he also tackled issues of the sustainability of the partnership, referring to the RePSEE programme and its pillars – Joint Call (implemented through SEE-ERA.NET PLUS), accompanying measures,

Young scientists programme and Innovation programme, and possible directions of future cooperation. He concluded mentioning the forthcoming meeting, scheduled for February 2011, where possible continuation should be discussed and decided.

Mr. Michele GENOVESE, the **EC** Project Officer for SEE-ERA.NET PLUS, appealed to the three countries that still had not sent their reconfirmation letters to do so. The payment from EC had been ready, but the letters from the three countries were still missing, which slowed down the process.

After SEE-ERA.NET PLUS, **COST** developments were presented. **Ms. Svetlana VOINOVA** from the COST office started with reminding the participants that the programme was still an attractive tool for the WBC. She mentioned that, thanks to the Steering Platform, there had been considerable improvements in communication with Montenegro (the Ministry of Education and Science) and Albania (ARTI) about their participation in the programme. To that end, an Albanian delegation visited the COST office, and an Info day was planned for November 22. In Montenegro, an Info Day was held in Podgorica in October. Since there are no coordinators for the programme in non-COST countries, these developments were considered significant. Next, further measures had been approved to facilitate participation of non-COST countries, e.g. launching of new e-tool for applications (planned for September, yet still in testing phase) as of January 2011. Main improvements are reflected in the fact that the interested countries should not seek approval from the COST committee in the initial stage. This should, hopefully, considerably speed up the approval procedure. As to the international cooperation with the rest of the world, a new agreement with Argentina was signed.

On behalf of the **Regional Cooperation Council – RCC**, **Mr. Mladen DRAGASEVIC** spoke about the ongoing activities of the organization, as integrative part of the RCC Strategy for the period 2011-2013 (Building Human Capital Component): ReSPA (Regional School for Public Administration) was officially opened in November (situated in Montenegro - Danilovgrad), with two-day meeting of multi-beneficiary IPA, then Regional Strategy for Research and Development for Innovation, which had been approved under the Multi-beneficiary IPA programme, and should start with the implementation in November 2011 (with the World Bank as contracting agency, which should work jointly with the Coordination body composed of WBC representatives). The value of the project approved is 1,5 million euro.

Last but not least, in the area of higher education, RCC supported a project named “Structural Reform in Higher Education in Western Balkans”. It is a cooperation among universities of the region, as well as other institutions in charge of higher education reform. The project was approved within the TEMPUS programme (with a budget of 1 million euro), its implementation starts January 2011.

Mr. Svatopluk HALADA informed about **EUREKA**. The initiative celebrated 25 years in 2010, with, at the moment, 40 full members – 39 countries and the EC. As for the extension, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina had been involved in activities, and association of South Korea had been underway. A mission to Albania was scheduled for the beginning of December; in Bosnia and Herzegovina two training sessions aimed at governmental officials and project managers took place. Discussions with

Bosnia and Herzegovina for additional activities are currently ongoing. The day before, a meeting with Montenegro was held discussing possibilities of joining EUREKA. Regarding statistics of WBC participation, Slovenia had been the EU partner that WBC work with, on bilateral and multilateral basis, followed by Austria and Czech Republic, as well as Germany, Greece, Italy, Spain. Summarizing weaknesses, he pointed out the absence of political visibility of the programme, insufficient promotion and involvement of the institutions and lack of national co-funding. Finally, he mentioned the example of Serbia, as a country with significant progress in participation.

After the second round of presentations on developments in cooperation, the focus moved to invited guests, with the main topic on involvement of industry and shift towards innovation.

5 Involvement of private sector/SMEs in research cooperation

First to be tackled was **involvement of private sector/SMEs in research cooperation**. The presentation was given by the representative from UEAPME, Genesis Initiative, **Mr. Christian LISTER**, communications Director of The Genesis Initiative in the UK, who focused on trying to answer the following questions: *Why should SMEs invest in research? How to attract SMEs into research and how to cooperate with FP7 and other instruments?*

Regarding the UK SMEs, the first thing pointed out was that they are insufficiently utilizing the FP7 opportunities. In his opinion, that was the consequence not of the EC and their procedures, but that the UK failed on national level to bring the programme closer to this target group. He gave an engaging expert account on how the whole programme apparently looks to the SMEs, and tried to bring closer the way of their thinking and functioning. A research was conducted among 100 UK SMEs on their general awareness on the programme: There were only 9 positive answers, and, in addition, 8 out of 9 believed it was 'something to do with academia'. So, what should be changed in the approach to dissemination is that the national authorities in charge should engage with all forms of technology and communication SMEs utilize. He explained that SMEs across the world are shy and timid, so, where there are any kinds of barriers present, they tend not to go. So, he suggested the approach of proactive dissemination – 'you got to let them know they can talk to you'. The way it had been done was not effective, so he suggested using different social networks and signposting and social media – like `twitter` using `hashtags`, etc.

He moved to the next stage, i.e. what happens once the SMEs learn what there is in the programme for them. After finally obtaining the necessary information, there is another barrier. First of all, SMEs have little or no funds for research, especially in the ongoing crisis. In order to reach them, one should be aware that 'words can be barriers', meaning that formulations used to present the opportunities are not adequate. He pointed out that since we need to expand the knowledge base the focus should not only be on fast growing start-ups. Otherwise, Europe will keep lagging behind. EC should think of others that will never be bigger than SMEs and adapt the approach to them. He pointed out the necessity to 'combat the fear', and SMEs fear red tape. So, again he returned to the national governments and their responsibility in the process and approach: whenever addressing the SMEs, one should start with pointing out the benefits, in concrete figures.

Comments and discussion:

Mr. Đuro KUTLAČA from the Mihailo Pupin Institute, Serbia, welcomed the presentation, since the focus was shifted to the industry and SMEs. He pointed out the difference between the situation in UK and in WBC, namely Serbia, where the level of involvement of SMEs and industry in FP and CIP had been even less, and that in the case of WBC SMEs even simple computer literacy is missing. The business enterprise sector almost does not exist. The adequate approach to awareness rising should move from the internet based to actually visiting the SMEs and industry in the beginning, he pointed out.

Mr. DAMIANI welcomed very much the presentation and expressed one word: `bravo`. He asked some explanation on the definition of SMEs for the survey: would it be all SMEs? Are they of the type of ice cream parlors, cleaning firms, etc., not users or even adapters of technologies or did the investigation involve the specialized/high tech SMEs only? Mr. Lister replied that they chose those they believed had at least basic knowledge, from the fields of ICT and biotechnology. As his advice to the WBC, he said that catching up should and would not take 50 years (as it was pointed out by Mr. Kutlača), and that the process is more adaptation than barriers.

Mr. Bernd REICHERT from the EC underlined that countries and governments and people in charge should avoid making up their mind about what an SME is, and which areas they should work in. Best projects were actually found in a variety of sectors such as for example bakeries on quality standards. He also supported the idea of being proactive and active in awareness rising.

Mr. HALADA pointed out the importance of language barriers in the SMEs areas outside English speaking countries and areas, and, with that aim, establishing services on national level, in national language.

Mr. LISTER however, once again pointed out the fact that UK had still not been successful enough, even though there had been no language barriers, and that it was national level where the UK 'fell'.

6 Research for the benefit of SMEs

The section started with the presentation of specific FP7 SME programme, statistics and best practices, given by **Mr. Bernd REICHERT**, from **DG RTD**.

He explained why SMEs should go for FP, pointing out the importance of supporting more companies in making them fit and ready for global competition. One of the ideas is also linking internationalization (providing new partners and markets) and innovation. The easiest way to get into it is research. In the end, somebody has to pick up all the ideas coming out of the FP. Next points in his presentation were the categories and typology of SMEs in FP7. The categories were defined in accordance with the intensity of their research activities (70% with none or few RTD activities and less than 3% research companies). As to the typology, there are companies using FP7 as strategic core for their progress (mainly IT sector), these choose partners and are proactive. The second group are suppliers, interested in being subcontracted. Finally, there are the so-called networkers, interested not in topics, but in networks

and new business partners. He moved to possibilities for SMEs in FP7 specific programmes and goals set. In Cooperation, the programme had still not been sufficiently used, which would possibly lead to reduction of the opportunities. In the People programme, *Industry-Academia Partnerships and Pathways* should especially be interesting for young companies, since they quite often are still able to understand the language of academia. However, room for improvement was noticed here as well. In Capacities, Research for the benefit of SMEs, the goal was set to strengthen the innovation capacities of SME to develop new products and markets by outsourcing of research.

Next he pointed out the EUROSTARS programme, a joint initiative with EUREKA, for which Member States and EC allocate funds.

The analysis of participation had been done since FP5, and some messages on good practice were given, e.g. that SMEs benefit more from the projects when involved directly, that there had been negotiation problems with research organizations concerning the exploitation of results, so it should be negotiated beforehand. Next, coordinating SMEs had been more successful. However, due to the problems with their financial viability, EC reluctantly entrusted them with the coordination of projects.

He concluded with 10 tips for participating, comparing the bureaucratic approach of FP with one of venture capitalists, and corresponding success rate. Both had been practically the same. Should SMEs aim for getting good support in FP8, they should be proactive, come up with the demand and engage in lobbying.

This presentation was followed by one on **EUROSTARS Programme**, presented by **Mr. HALADA**, from EUREKA secretariat. The initiative is a joint one, between EUREKA and EC, focusing on RTD performing SMEs. So far, five calls have been launched. The evaluation is two-step, after which the negotiation and contracting takes place, but the whole cycle takes no longer than six months, which has contributed to the success of the programme. Other reasons may be that the budget is virtual – national funds are used only for coordination of national institutions. All procedures are in e-form. All communication is done through the portal. www.eurostras-EUREKA.eu. EUREKA secretariat is in charge of the programme.

As the last presentation in this section, the **Role of European Technology Platforms** was described. **Ms. Patricia POSTIGO-MCLAUGHLIN** from **DG RTD/C.2** was the presenter.

She explained the composition, mechanisms and principles of functioning of the ETPs. Starting with their composition and rationale for their initialization, she explained that, in practice, those are networks of stakeholders in research priorities in a particular sector. Companies are those to push networks forward. First ETPs were established 6-7 years ago, as a response to, at the time, present lack of private investment in research. The aim was to bring private research investment to Europe and closer to FP in order to mobilize research money of EU companies, and to bridge the gaps between companies and academia. The active participants: companies, universities, research centers and sometimes development centers, discuss their vision on particular technologies for years to come, and make their research agendas that were launched before FP7 was developed. They provide strategic research agendas for FP7, and contribute to annual programmes. ETPs usually have only

annual meetings, but their activities in pursuing their priorities continue through Working Groups, which is how they also try to influence the EC for their topics.

As to other activities carried out by Platforms, there are no rules and they differ, ranging from publishing brochures, involvement, dissemination, technology transfer activities, etc.

As to the set up, many do not have legal status but use the people and network, some of them are non-profit, some have membership fees. Currently, there are 36 ETPs, in different areas: ICT, energy, bio, transport, industrial economy. The EC does not have allocated funds for their functioning, but they apply to Calls of proposals, namely SSAs and CAs that support them in the creation of networks. A lot of the ETPs, after initially being supported by EC funds, now cover their costs.

Results of a survey conducted in 2009 among 1000 ETP members showed that 93% of them would join again. Added values of the membership include networking, being together with those active in the research system, opportunities to get into consortia, etc.. However, there are differences between sectors, e.g. textile sector, organic electronics or photonics did not have prior associations and interlocutors. Also, emerging sectors see clearer benefits.

When it comes to SMEs` opportunities, ETPs are not SME specific. They can act through universities, development agencies and membership in national platforms.

What would be the value for WBC and creation of Regional Platforms: first of all, it will bring them to the loop of what is happening in research funding, can become suppliers to research actors, to enter research players in the EU, networking. In order to link to existing or develop new ones, first of all, cost-benefit assessment should be carried out. Through Regional Platforms, WBC could more easily hook up to EU networks. It would benefit big companies, as well as SMEs, which need a push from regional development agencies. In establishing them, the region has to consider ways to support research actors to enter networks, to funds for pre-accession, enable participation in trainings, dissemination. National platforms developed in Spain and Poland can be used as examples of good practice. Also Austria has national platforms in five fields. In the meantime, one of them became an agency.

Comments and discussion:

Ms. Filiz HAYIRLI from Turkey wanted to know if there are exact figures about the percentage of partnerships resulting from the ETPs.

The answer was that there was no way to measure that, especially due to the changes in memberships, but that best parameter is that 93 % of satisfied members.

Ms. Lora PAVLOVA asked if there is a way to ensure that a company involved in FP7 will continue and get involved in CIP, JTI, and can sustainability be ensured.

Mr. Bernd REICHERT from the EC pointed out that it is not the task of individual companies to know about different initiatives, but this should be the task of the entire network. Regional initiatives should be used as a place to disseminate information.

Mr. Svatopluk HALADA underlined that it should be the universities that come to enterprises and ask for help in commercialization of the ideas they have.

Ms. Branka ŽIŽIĆ asked about the starting mechanisms for creation of TPs, and if it is similar to chambers of commerce. Also, and for the purpose of priority setting in WBC-INCO.NET, what are the chances for regional TPs to have better success in suggesting to EC their regional priorities?

Ms. POSTIGO-MCLAUGHLIN said that regional development agencies had been a typical intermediary. Regarding approaching the EC, the answer was that the EC was committed to structured dialogue with European TPs, not with national or regional platforms. Consequently, best way would be then to join European TPs.

7 From Research to Innovation

A presentation of the Innovation Union and scoreboard was made by **Ms. Tania FRIEDERICHS (DG RTD)**.

She presented the European Innovation Scoreboard for 2009 which establishes well the innovation gap in Europe and in particular in which sectors and countries and the innovation gap with the USA and Japan. From all the data collected it is clear that Europe needs urgently to address the innovation dimension when engaging in research and business. This was the aim of the recently adopted Communication on Innovation Union (IU).

A brief presentation was made of the highlights of this Communication and actions proposed to make Europe more competitive. Efforts at all levels are required and also the candidate and potential candidate countries are expected to contribute to the building of the Innovation Union. The IU confirmed the importance of the realisation of the European research area and to speed up the level of investment. Amongst others the target of achieving 3% of GDP invested in research was confirmed and Member States would be closer monitored (preparation of National reform agendas; screening legislation etc.). The IU would also result in a number of other initiatives aiming at facilitating access to Venture capital; stimulate innovative products and services through government procurement and awards for design. With respect to research cooperation, joint programming will be stimulated and Partnership will be created on big societal issues. As a pilot case research efforts and funding on ageing was under discussion in the Council. The scoreboard on Innovation and Research will be merged and indicators to monitor progress will be streamlined. Commission recommended active reading of the Communication and willingness to revert to the Communication at a later stage.

Ms. Caroline MANCEL outlined that the Belgian presidency considered it as very important that not only research ministers react, but industry as well. The Presidency started with an informal council for both ministers to discuss innovation. The aim is not only to respond directly to the communication (political issue), but also to prioritize actions (35 proposed; not all can be immediately implemented) – a clear roadmap for actions in 2010 and 2011 needs to state responsibilities clearly. The idea is that the roadmap will regularly be reviewed, so the Council will regularly organize innovation sessions to review, monitor and introduce new actions.

Ms. Kelly VAVASI gave report on **WBC-INCO.NET-Enhanced: debriefing on 1st Innovation Dialogue Forum** as a first output of the newly added Workpackage 8 on Innovation of WBC-INCO.NET. First she presented the objectives of the new activities approved last September, then moved to the WP8 structure and tasks, underlining the development of a Joint Action Plan that should be based on the work done. Dialogue fora, one per year, will be organized with the aim to support further development of a regional research and innovation area in SEE, promote the inter-regional dialogue and explore synergies via liaison with networks outside SEE as well as continue the dialogue with multilateral initiatives and programmes for the targeted region. In the first meeting, held in Bečići, the current situation in national systems was presented followed by regional aspects towards development of the innovation activities. There were nearly 60 participants from 16 countries. Main issues that need to be addressed ranged from lack of coordinated innovation policies and strategies to deficiencies in statistics. Indicative proposals were made, from monitoring mechanisms to teaching young people about the importance of innovation.

Coming from overarching policy and strategic level to project implementation, presentation of a **CIP project, NUMIX on Eco-Innovation** was given by **Ms. Ivana GLISEVIC** project manager for Montenegro. **Mr. DAMIANI** announced it as `moving from theory to practice`, with the topic of making concrete from plastic waste.

Ms. Glisevic briefly mentioned the CIP programme and Montenegrin participation in it (EIP component is eligible to the country as of March 2008). The NUMIX project is funded under the Eco-Innovation instrument of EIP. Partners come from three countries - Italy, Montenegro and Spain.

Last in this section, and also last official presentation for the day, was given by **Central European Initiative (CEI)**, on past experiences, current financial instruments and a strategic project for the future by **Mr. Giorgio ROSSO CICOGNA**, Alternate Secretary General of CEI.

Being at the Platform meeting for the first time, he gave also an introduction on the structure and mission of the organization which is an intergovernmental organization of 18 member states, 9 of them are EU Member States, others are (potential) candidate countries and other three are Neighbour Countries (Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus). The mission is to promote regional cooperation for European integration. S&T are always among the priorities. In this field, CEI has a very good record of activities: S&T network among the institutions of excellence based in Trieste, international centres for S&T, etc. CEI is active in University networks as well. Important activities in this field are also carried out through the CEI Knowhow Exchange Programme and CEI Cooperation Fund. CEI is also a partner in several EU projects. Basic engagement is in promoting mobility: in doing so, over the last two years, almost 10.000 people were involved in CEI sponsored events and activities. In the last 7 years, CEI supported 30 projects of technology transfer, with 19,000.000 euro invested over the years (thanks to the Italian Government Trust Fund at the EBRD). This has generated additional investment of total 2.5 billion euro by EBRD, by other institutions, and by companies involved. So, a multiplier of 156 can be considered as quite an achievement.

However, good ideas are not self sufficient. The journey from science to innovation, and then to competitiveness is much more complicated. There are many differences and ways to overcome them. Basic thing is: the 'marriage' between science and industry is a difficult one. In view of the their experience, CEI can play a role of a 'broker'. The region and the EU have to create stronger critical mass in science. Without that, even with best scientists, will not be able do a lot. A few good strategic projects are needed, interdisciplinary by nature. The easiest solution seems to bring together best scientists, but that is insufficient since they also have to be provided with resources. There are plenty of excellent researchers, but they need to be better organized. The only way to get them organized is to let them work in strategic project. Mr. Rosso Cicogna offered a concrete idea: next generation biofuels, as the most attractive among options for renewable sources, especially in accordance with the EC goal of increasing by 2020 to 10% the percentage of non-fossil origin fuels of the total fuel demand for auto-traction.

Questions and discussion:

Mr. ROSSO CICOGNA answered that the many projects were in the field of energy efficiency. As for the multiplier of 156, it was reached through the following process: starting from the company that needs a solution, making feasibility study and turning it into a bankable project. As a next step, it is brought to a bank, and approved. Other companies, needing the same solution, are put in contact with the initial one, through which they may have quicker decision, and cheaper feasibility phase, since some activities are only repeated. Results are one or two additional bankable projects.

Mr. DAMIANI explained that CEI expressed the wish to be involved in systematic way. The Platform members agreed to invite CEI on regular basis.

Ms. Branka ŽIŽIĆ also mentioned the Regional Competitiveness Initiative prepared by the OECD, aimed at the region, through which one pilot project per country, related to innovation or human resources, will be developed. Respective working groups will be created to deal with the initiative. In addition, it can be considered to disseminate the results through the SP meetings, inviting the OECD to participate.

8 Concluding Remarks

Presentation and adoption of conclusions including recommendations on future actions and work:

The prepared conclusions were discussed, commented and concluded by the participants after adapting several sentences regarding RCC, RegPot calls as well as adding innovation players.

Mr. NEDOVIĆ asked what will be the follow-up of the expressed interest for targeted calls, would it be taken up as last time.

Mr. DAMIANI said that he was not in the position to guarantee the follow-up in line with expectations. In any case, at the next SP meeting, it will be reviewed under the 'follow-up'.

