



Leopoldina
Nationale Akademie
der Wissenschaften



INSTITUT DE FRANCE
Académie des sciences

Joint press release

National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina
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Académie des sciences – Institut de France

Western Balkans Process Initiates New International Institution to Support Junior Scientists: *Western Balkans Research Foundation*

Following the recommendation of the *Joint Science Conference*, which was jointly organised by the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina and the French Académie des sciences, the Heads of State and Government decided at the Western Balkans Summit on 12 July in Trieste, Italy, to establish an international body to support junior scientists at scientific institutions in the Balkans. The *Western Balkans Research Foundation* will be central measure to slow down brain drain from the Balkans and increase brain drain and brain circulation in the Balkans and in Europe.

The *Joint Science Conference* is one of the three pillars of the *Western Balkans Process / Berlin Process*, an initiative of the German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the German Federal Government, alongside with 12 other European countries and the European Commission, aiming to support the integration of the Western Balkans into the European Union.

The 3rd Joint Science Conference held in Paris, in June 2017, brought together distinguished scientists and representatives of national academies, rectors' conferences and research organisations from the 13 countries of the Western Balkans Process, in total around 60 participants. They discussed strategies to improve the national science systems and to create growth in Southeastern Europe through education, research and innovation. The proceedings focused on ways to fund research activities of junior scientists in the Western Balkans, aiming to slow down brain drain and – at the same time – create structures of excellent research and intensify cooperation between researchers from the EU and the Western Balkans.

The results were summarised in a Joint Statement, providing independent advice to decision-makers. It features the proposal to establish an international body in Trieste, Italy – the *Western Balkans Research Foundation* –, which will award grants to outstanding junior scientists, enabling them to create their own research labs and teams in the Balkans within five to seven years. The grants will be awarded irrespective of origins and scientific affiliation, solely based on quality criteria. On 12 July 2017, the Heads of State and Government accepted this proposal and decided to start the process of establishing the Western Balkans Research Foundation. The Joint Science Conference of the Western Balkans Process will manage the implementation process.

The Joint Statement and further information is available on the dedicated webpages:

- www.leopoldina.org/en/jsc or
- www.academie-sciences.fr/fr/Communiqués/processus-balkans-occidentaux.

Western Balkans Process – Berlin Process

Fourteen parties currently participate in the Western Balkans Process: the EU member states Germany, France, Austria, Italy, Croatia, Slovenia and the United Kingdom, together with the six Western Balkans states Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, FYRo Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia as well as the European Commission. The process supports the efforts to integrate the Western Balkan countries into the EU and to strengthen the regional cooperation in politics, economy, education, science and society. The Leopoldina was entrusted by the German Federal Government to take the lead in the field of science and society.

German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina / Nationale Akademie der Wissenschaften Leopoldina

With the expertise of some 1,500 distinguished scientists, the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina addresses key issues of particular significance for the future of society from a scientific perspective and independently of economic or political interests, shares its findings with policymakers and the public. The Leopoldina represents the German scientific community in international committees and pursues the advancement of science for the benefit of humankind and for shaping a better future.

French Academy of Sciences / Académie des sciences – Institut de France

Created in 1666, the Académie des Sciences gathers some of the most eminent French and foreign scientists. With 260 members, 90 corresponding members and 120 foreign members, the Académie des sciences is a multidisciplinary assembly with an open international outlook. In line with a long tradition, the Académie is heavily engaged in encouraging scientific life, promoting science education at all levels, advising the government and the public on issues involving science and society and representing the French scientific community on the international level in science networks and bilateral collaborations.

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