

## **Western Balkans contribute to “Innovation Union”**

### **EU-funded project WBC-INCO.NET supports innovation capacities in the region**

In its communication “**Europe 2020 Flagship Initiative: Innovation Union**”, adopted on October 6, the European Commission sets out the necessary ideas and actions for creating “*more jobs, improved lives, better society*” through innovation. It outlines that boosting innovation by applying research results is a key factor for economic growth and competitiveness, and calls upon all stakeholders to contribute where appropriate.

### **Western Balkan countries expected to contribute to Innovation Union**

The Communication explicitly states that the candidate and potential candidate countries are expected to contribute to the realisation of the Innovation Union. National strategies to increase research funding, in particular by encouraging private investment, are of vital importance for integration in the European Research Area (ERA) and the Innovation Union – and thus in the EU. It is anticipated that contributing to the EU’s “3 percent target” (meaning that 3 percent of the GDP should be invested in research and technology) will also become a benchmark in future accession negotiations.

### **WBC-INCO.NET enhances innovation in the Balkans**

By joining forces of 29 partners – ministries responsible for science, technology and innovation, agencies and institutes from the EU, the WBC and Turkey – the project will implement a number of measures in order to support innovation capacities in the region in the course of the next three years.

WBC-INCO.NET will develop an Action Plan for further WBC cooperation in the field of innovation, enhance closer cooperation between research and innovation stakeholders and exchange information and best practices on innovation policies. It will also implement trainings on technology transfer for innovation stakeholders as well as awareness raising measures concerning market demands and benefits of innovation targeted at the research community. The ultimate scope of these activities is to enhance the Western Balkan countries’ success with future joint initiatives on innovation. A first “Innovation Dialogue Forum” was successfully held on November 8 to 9 in Bečići, Montenegro, focusing on the national innovation systems in the WBC.

### **ICEIRD 2011 and WBC-INCO.NET - Partners in innovation**

The *4th International Conference on Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Regional Development (ICEIRD 2011)* will gather decision makers, scientists and practitioners from the business sector in May 2011 to generate discussion and exchange on the potential of entrepreneurship promotion and innovation for national and regional competitiveness (see also: <http://www.iceird.org/2011/>).

Sharing similar aims, WBC-INCO.NET and ICEIRD are working hand in hand to improve cooperation and competitiveness in the Western Balkans. At ICEIRD 2011, WBC-INCO.NET will organise a number of informal networking and side events aiming at an exchange of information and ideas among decision makers, innovation experts and practitioners. Results of the conference and the back-to-back events will also be considered in the Action Plan for

future joint innovation activities to be compiled by WBC-INCO.NET. Increased cooperation between the two initiatives is planned for the 2012 edition of ICEIRD.

### **Find out more and get involved**

Through its portal [www.wbc-inco.net](http://www.wbc-inco.net), newsletters and reports, WBC-INCO.NET engages in information exchange on S&T policy cooperation with the Western Balkan countries. Access to the platform and its comprehensive databases is free of charge and open to everyone interested. Users are also invited to contribute their own content, good practices and suggestions on how to improve the S&T systems in the region by sending an email to [office@wbc-inco.net](mailto:office@wbc-inco.net).

### **For further information, please contact:**

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