

Brussels, 29 June 2009

Commissioner Potočnik visits Serbia: towards full integration into the European Research Area

Today, Janez Potočnik, European Commissioner for Science and Research, will participate in the EU Research Information Event in Belgrade. He will address scientists, business representatives and representatives from Serbian Ministries on the importance of increasing Serbia's research cooperation, especially within the European Research Area (ERA), and he will announce a special call for proposals for the Western Balkan region. The event will be a unique opportunity for Serbian scientists and business representatives to receive detailed information about the funding opportunities offered by the 7th European Framework Programme for Research (FP7) and to strengthen dialogue and networking opportunities in view of facilitating Serbia's integration into the European Research Area. During his visit to Belgrade Commissioner Potočnik will meet with Božidar Đelić, Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia, responsible both for the European integration and Science and Technology, to discuss in more detail Serbia's national strategy for research and its contribution to the ERA objectives. Commissioner will also have meetings with Serbian President Boris Tadić and the Prime Minister Mirko Cvetković.

EU Commissioner for Science, Janez Potočnik, stated: *"In times of crisis, building a sound and sustainable economy requires R&D investments by Serbia and the Western Balkan region. More cooperation in science will also increase Serbia's knowledge of EU decision-making. The integration of the country into the European Research Area is an important step in the pre-accession process for European Union membership."*

A special call for proposals for the Western Balkans region

To encourage scientists from Serbia and the entire Western Balkan region, Janez Potočnik will announce a special call for proposals to be launched during the summer that will address the specific needs of the region with respect to research capacity.

Opportunities for Serbian's scientific community

During the day, representatives from the European Commission and from Serbian research programmes will present the European policies and funding opportunities under FP7 and the Serbian matching programmes in various areas of research such as health, energy, information technologies and food, agriculture and biotechnology. The European programmes to support researcher's mobility and frontier research will also be highlighted.

Helping Serbia's pre-accession process

In view of Serbia's pre-accession process, a general session will explain how the EU-funded Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) can work for research. The Commissioner will underline as well the role of the JRC as key player in the EU's R&D cooperation with Serbia. The Joint Research Centre assists the country in its preparation to comply with EU's legislation in the framework of a special programme developed for enlargement candidates. In particular, this programme focuses on complex scientific and technical issues underpinning EU legislation in a wide range of policy areas which are important for the citizen, such as: environment, health, food, energy, chemicals, agriculture and nuclear safety.

Beyond the funding possibilities, integrating into the European Research Area

Since 1 January 2007, Serbia has been associated to FP7 and can participate in all calls for proposals. More than 90 applicants have already obtained EU funding to engage in research and networking with leading research entities in the EU and the Western Balkan Region. Cooperation under FP7 also allows Serbia to participate in the wider European Research Area and contribute, together with the EU Member States, to the setting of research priorities. Launched by the Commission in 2000, the ERA concept combines: a European "internal market" for research, where researchers, technology and knowledge freely circulate; effective European-level coordination of national and regional research activities, programmes and policies; and initiatives implemented and funded at European level.

Background

The 7th European Framework Programme for Research (FP7) supports scientific research in the EU with a budget of almost 54 billion Euros over 7 years (2007-2013). As an associated country, Serbia can compete in FP7's calls for proposals on the same basis as EU Member States and is either observer or full Member in the European Research Area governance bodies.

For more information:

- on research cooperation under FP7: <http://ec.europa.eu/research/iscp/index.cfm>
- on the European Research Area : http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/index_en.html
- on the activities of the JRC and the opportunities for collaboration: <http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/jrc/index.cfm>
- on the pre-accession process : http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/how-does-it-work/index_en.htm