



Editorial

Dear readers,

the 9th edition of the WBC-INCO.NET Journal is published on the occasion of the 12th Meeting of the Steering Platform on Research for the Western Balkan countries, taking place in Tirana, Albania, on June 12–13, 2012. One of the key issues to be discussed by the Steering Platform this time is the concept of *Smart Specialisation* (which is a strategic approach to economic development through targeted support of Research and Innovation) and its practical implications for the WB region on the road to Horizon 2020.

Two other important events will take place in Tirana during June 12–13: the WBC-INCO.NET *Innovation Dialogue Forum* focusing on the Action Plan to increase innovation capacities in the region, and the *Knowledge Transfer Study workshop*, which is part of a workshop series covering 39 European countries in 2011 and 2012. This workshop is intended to discuss the status and challenges of knowledge transfer from universities and public research institutes, as well as good practices which are visible. It is organised by empirica GmbH from Germany and it takes place in co-operation with the WBC-INCO.NET project and back-to-back with a session of the Steering Platform on Research for the Western Balkan countries.

In this issue of the WBC-INCO.NET Journal, you can also read more about developments towards *Regional Strategy for Research and Development for Innovation for Western Balkans*, in an article provided by Mladen Dragašević from the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). Another highlight of this issue are *“Success stories on innovation from the West Balkans”*, kindly prepared by René Wintjens and Jean Severijns.

In the second half of 2012, WBC-INCO.NET will emphasise the topic of *Smart Specialisation* as well, while sharing information on the currently running funding programmes for research and innovation, FP7 and others, as well as the upcoming Horizon 2020 will be continued.

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

Imprint

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ISSN 1991-1750
Subscription and recent issues: <http://wbc-inco.net/object/link/10060>



11th Meeting of the Steering Platform, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

11th Steering Platform Meeting: Conclusions

The Steering Platform on Research for the Western Balkan Countries met in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina on December 1, 2011. The meeting was co-chaired by the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Bosnia and Herzegovina – on behalf of the Western Balkan Countries – who hosted the event – and the European Commission.

The Steering Platform heard the introductory statements from Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Polish Presidency and the European Commission, from which it became clear that efforts for the next Research and Innovation Framework Programme “Horizon 2020” are high on the political agenda of the EU, as well as efforts undertaken at bi-regional level to strengthen the research and innovation capacity building. The Platform welcomed, in particular, Poland’s commitment towards Eastern Europe, including the Balkan Region.

From the presentations of the Progress Reports, the Platform took note that all Members are further contributing to strengthening the research and innovation capacity in the region. The Platform was also encouraged by the different actions and measures taken by the Balkan countries to improve their participation in the Seventh EU Research Framework Programme (FP7) in preparation for Horizon 2020. In this regard, the presentation by the CEI on the Next Generation Bio Fuels was considered as an area of interest and one to be pursued based on the CEI Trieste Declaration. The Platform welcomed EUREKA’s further work with the region, as well as the progress made on the “Regional Competitiveness Initiative” presented by OECD.

The Platform underlined the importance to address the research and innovation aspects of the Danube Strategy in general and expressed the wish that the FP7 Work Programmes 2013 will foresee actions to support and facilitate the implementation of the funding of the research priorities for it. In this context, the importance to build upon the SEE-ERA.NET PLUS and the WBC-INCO.NET was mentioned.

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The need to continue support for all enlargement countries with the Steering Platform was also called upon.

The Platform also welcomed the actions of other stakeholders and donors, such as the USAID/SIDA supported project "FIRMA" which contributes to the implementation of national strategies in line with the EU Innovation Union objectives. National governments are encouraged to interact closer with these stakeholders and include activities in the national progress reporting.

The Platform welcomed the WBC-INCO.NET study analyzing the innovation capacity and national innovation systems, which contained useful recommendations for further strengthening and promoting research cooperation with and in the Balkan Region. The Platform noted that several recommendations are similar to the commitments identified as relevant for the enlargement countries under the Innovation Union.

The Platform took note of the commitments of the Innovation Union on which the enlargement countries should start preparations. In this context, the need to develop better S&T statistics is of utmost importance. The support offered by UNESCO was welcomed. Given the importance of statistics in the overall

accession context, the Platform also underlined the important role of Eurostat. The Platform welcomed the launch of the project "Regional R&D for Innovation Strategy for the Western Balkans" which took place in Belgrade on 23–25 November and underlined the importance of establishing, as soon as possible in this process, some key actions and measures to strengthen the regional cooperation on research and innovation and in turn regional competitiveness. The study on innovation capacity was seen as a useful tool for the regional dimension of R&I cooperation.

The Platform welcomed the presentation on "Horizon 2020" the day after its adoption by the European Commission and took note of the very ambitious goals of the new instrument. It was agreed to revert to the proposal at a later stage, in particular in view of the association of the enlargement countries to the programme. The synergy with the next IPA II was welcomed; several questions were raised on the effectiveness of the synergy, which should be well prepared.

LINK *Steering Platform Meeting in Sarajevo* ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/event/5694>

News from WBC-INCO.NET portal

The WBC-INCO.NET portal attracts more than 10,000 unique visitors each month and offers news articles, event and call announcements as well as different databases such as links, documents, projects, organisations and research infrastructures.

In order to further support the communication and cooperation between WBC-INCO.NET users and to encourage the development and exchange of innovative ideas, new sections on the website have been developed such as notice board, glossary and useful tools.

Starting with April 2012, every month a new interesting project is presented to our readers more in detail via website and bi-weekly newsletter. The project of the month June – WBinNO – is presented by the project coordinator, Mr. Mark Knell of the Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education (NIFU), Oslo, Norway.

LINKS *Register and submit your news* ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/register>
Post your notice ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/notice/list>
Find useful information on selected topics ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/usefultool/list> and <http://wbc-inco.net/glossary/list>

Project of the month April:

Inter-sectoral Mobility of Researchers in South-Eastern Europe (I-SEEMob)

LINK <http://wbc-inco.net/object/project/9647>

Project of the month May:

Boosting EU-Western Balkan Countries Research Collaboration in the Monitoring and Control Area (BALCON)

LINK <http://wbc-inco.net/object/project/9557>

Project of the month June:

Innovation policy learning from Norway in Western Balkans (WBinNO)

The main objective of the WBinNO project is to assist policy makers in the Western Balkan countries to develop and implement innovation policies by way of identifying appropriate 'good' practices in other countries and through the analysis of their emerging innovation systems. Countries in the region depend on the creation, transfer and use of knowledge to catch-up with technological leaders, such as Norway. Success depends on the development and implementation of new institutions and policy instruments that are complementary to the needs of the local economy.

In the project, Norway provides the model or a framework within which one can identify 'good' policy practices and policy learning. Norway is a resource-based, knowledge-driven economy, which is relatively egalitarian, homogeneous and based on trust. It provides a good example for policy learning through its experience and use of expertise from many different sources, including the economic sciences. The Western Balkan countries can benefit through this rich experience, despite the considerably diversity among the countries in the region.

The WBinNO project is a partnership of five institutes located in Norway, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, FYR of Macedonia and Serbia while funding for the project was provided by the Research Council Norway.

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LINKS *WBinNO project* ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/project/9980>
Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education (NIFU) ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/organisation/9983>
WBinNO event: Seminar on Innovation Policy learning in the Western Balkans (June 6, 2012) ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/event/9982>

News from Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)

Following the priorities set by the RCC Strategy and Work Programme 2011–2013, the RCC Secretariat focused its efforts on the development of an optimal model for implementation of the project *Regional Strategy for Research and Development for Innovation for Western Balkans*, which aims to strengthen capacities of the research community in the region and started in November 2011. Furthermore, the RCC Building Human Capital Unit is actively involved in monitoring implementation of the project started in January 2011, *Building Capacity for Structural Reform in Higher Education of Western Balkan Countries* aiming to facilitate further advances in effective higher education structural reform in the WB Region.

The RCC is continuing to encourage endeavors aimed at raising the political profile of research and innovation at the national level and increasing investment in the research capacity of the region as well as to strengthen connections among science, the education system, and the economy. Achieving these goals is crucial for making the best use of science and research in generating sustainable economic growth and new jobs. Western Balkan countries should become more familiar with the new integrated funding system of the EU research and innovation policy, first and foremost with the Innovation Union and Horizon 2020 programmes.

The RCC has supported efforts in the region for the establishment of mechanisms for doing research on the modalities of participation of the countries from the region in the EU programmes, preparing and assisting implementation of significant regional projects. Such a framework would be of concrete benefit to the enlargement countries in pooling their strengths to make better use of existing EU funds and towards building their own capacities.

The RCC Secretariat's flagship project in this area is the Regional Strategy for Research and Development for Innovation for Western Balkans (RSRDI). RCC organized and chaired a number of preparatory events/workshops, including the official launching of this two-year project, in Belgrade in November 2011 and the First Quarterly Workshop held at the RCC Secretariat premises in March 2012. The aim of the project, funded by € 1.5m MB IPA, is to develop a strategy that will interconnect research institutes, pool resources, train scientists, and transfer knowledge with the aim of increasing competitiveness.

The RSRDI Steering Committee, developed under the auspices of RCC, gathers representatives of research ministries as well as the World Bank as the implementing agency, the European Commission and the RCC Secretariat. This body provides guidance on the use of available resources and supervises project implementation and has the ultimate responsibility to draft this strategy on behalf of the beneficiary entities. The drafting team, nominated by the Steering Committee, is advised by a panel of regional stakeholders composed of representatives of higher-education institutions, research institutes, and the private sector from each beneficiary, as well as of international experts.

The first half of the two-year technical assistance project will focus on knowledge sharing and preparation of the draft strategy as well as country action plans by the beneficiary entities. The remaining twelve months would be dedicated to the consultation/dissemination of the draft strategy among the different stakeholders in the region and preparation of the final draft strategy and action plans.



Ministerial Conference "Developing Regional Research Strategy for the Western Balkans", Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, April 24, 2009

Regarding higher education, the RCC Secretariat has focused its efforts on assisting development and monitoring implementation of the project "Building Capacity for Structural Reform in Higher Education of Western Balkan Countries" (STREW). STREW is worth € 1m and it is financed from the regional dimension of the EU TEMPUS Programme.

The project, launched in January 2011, is coordinated by the University of Novi Sad and includes all relevant parties in the region in finding feasible joint solutions for current challenges in higher education reform. The RCC has expressed firm support to this regional project from its initial phase recognizing importance of the project and its main task to facilitate further advances in effective higher education structural reforms in the Western Balkans and its coherent convergence toward European Higher Education Area. The RCC is co-chairing meetings of the Steering Group of the project, which is responsible for the overall project coordination important for enabling quality of results and successful implementation of the project activity plan.

The RCC Secretariat continued promotion and development of new project ideas, together with national institutions, regional and international partners, in various thematic areas of great interest for the countries from the region, such as enhancing regional cooperation in doctoral education, or promotion of adult and lifelong learning and evidence-based policy making at the regional level. These efforts should be streamlined and implemented through the development of systematic regional projects, to be implemented by transparent and capable regionally-owned mechanisms.

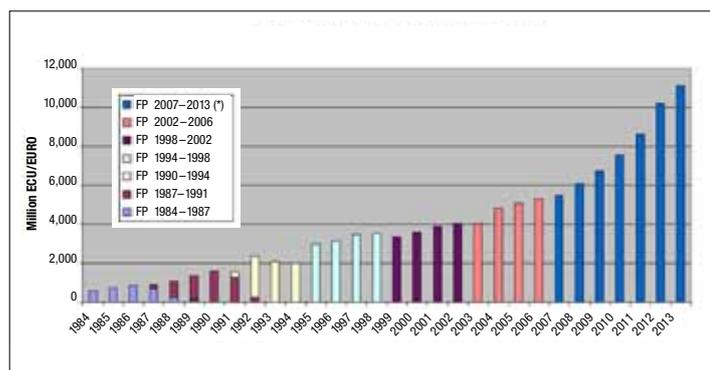
AUTHOR Mladen Dragašević ■ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/users/120>

LINK Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) ■ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/organisation/9310>

30 years of EU investment in research and innovation – and more to come

The year 2013 will see unprecedented expenditures for research and innovation in the Framework Programme! Although the period 2014–2020 will bring even bigger budgets and higher funding, it is very important to exploit the final calls in FP7, which will be launched in July 2012.

As the figure below shows, the funding available for the final call will be higher than ever before in almost all sub-programmes (only the budget in the Capacities sub-programme was higher in 2011 than it will be in 2013).



Development of R&I expenditure of the European Community since 1984

Even if we are talking about the “2013 budget”, you need to know that these 2013 calls will be launched in July 2012 and the deadlines will be as early as December 2012, so that in 2013 you can start your project and receive the pre-financing! There will not be any further calls in FP7 than the ones announced now.

Therefore we should truly push to exploit this opportunity to the maximum:

- Western Balkan countries are associated to FP7, national contributions to the FP7 budgets have been made, and the procedures are well established – association to Horizon 2020 will be subject to further negotiations.
- The “rules of the game” are well known both in the EU Member States as well as in the Western Balkan countries, the National Contact Points are well established and trained, help with the procedures (e.g. how to navigate the Participant Portal or how to deal with the Unique Registration Facility) is also available for all applicants.
- Horizon 2020 might go for more competitive and bigger projects with industry foci, so it might be more and more difficult to become partners in successful projects without a proven track record.

Action is needed now!

May and June 2012 have seen the publication of so-called “orientation papers”, informing about the topics for the final FP7 work programmes to be published. WBC-INCO.NET will continue to inform you in this regard as well as on the related “information days” in Brussels, in the region or in some other countries close to the region.

Such events are of the utmost importance to find partners for future projects! If the travel costs are a major issue for you, specific funds are available in some WBC for “preparatory consortium meetings” that could be exploited to that end.

If you have a question, look for a partner or some advice in preparing your FP7 strategy – WBC-INCO.NET team is available to support you with your application.

AUTHOR Elke Dall ■ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/users/2196>

WBC-INCO.NET contribution to a future Action plan to increase innovation capacities in the Western Balkan region

On April 2, 2012 the WBC-INCO.NET launched a call for concept notes contributing to a future action plan to increase innovation capacities in the Western Balkan region. This bottom-up approach aimed at collecting innovative ideas focusing on the following main topics:

- Improving governance, policymaking, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of national innovation systems
- Innovation support and incentives, accelerating commercialization and deepening collaboration with the business sector
- Increasing business R&D and facilitating innovative start-up companies, linking research and innovation with business and society

The collected ideas will be presented and further discussed during Innovation Dialogue Forum in Tirana in June 2012. The contributions will also constitute an input to the development of the “Regional Strategy on R&D for Innovation” that will be used as a baseline for future programming in the WB region and the area of innovation policy and support. Furthermore, contributions will be published in a discussion paper/book in order to further the discussion.

For this call there was one prize foreseen – an Apple iPad 3. The winner was drawn amongst all participants randomly and from all concept notes received between April 2, 2012 and May 15, 2012. The winner is Mr. Zoran Nechev (Association for development initiatives – Zenith) from Skopje, FYR of Macedonia. We congratulate!

LINK WBC-INCO.NET call for concept notes ■ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/news/9632>

Good practice examples of innovation policy, approaches and instruments in the EU Member States and the Western Balkans

According to the innovation market and research needs identified in the frame of two surveys conducted in our “Stocktaking” activity (Task 8.1), as well as according to the results obtained during the First Innovation Dialogue Forum held in Becici, Montenegro in November 2010, a collection of 45 good practice examples of programmes, instruments, and measures aiming at supporting innovation activities in the EU Member States and in the Western Balkan countries has been prepared and published online.

In order to further promote the good practices available in the WB countries, to exchange information within the region, assuming increased transferability, and also to inform stakeholders outside of the region about excellent schemes – a total of 24 good practice examples from the WBC were published in printed form as well.

LINKS Download the full version of the Good practice examples ■ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/document/7884>
Download the Good practice examples in WBC ■ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/document/9985>
Review Meeting in Tirana and Presentations ■ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/event/6394>

WBC-INCO.NET at the E2C – European Energy Conference



A vision on how the future of energy in Europe could look like was in the focus at the 2nd European Energy Conference “E2C”. It was held in Maastricht/The Netherlands from April 17–20, 2012 and chaired by Professor Harald Bolt, Forschungszentrum Jülich, Germany. This Conference was the forum to define the role of energy science and research in the transformation process towards the future sustainable European energy system.

WBC-INCO.NET supported the participation of 18 energy experts from the Western Balkan countries and 6 project partners. Furthermore, WBC-INCO.NET was present at the Conference with an exhibition stand to showcase energy excellence in the region.



WBC-INCO.NET exhibition stand at the E2C Conference

The conference programme combined plenary keynote presentations on diverse energy themes with devoted symposia in specialised fields. Keynote lectures were given on overarching subjects of energy and associated climate research. Thematic symposia addressed more specific topics of the symposia.



Consultation Session in the field of Energy

WBC-INCO.NET organised two specific sessions targeting the Western Balkan countries:

- one public session informing about cooperation possibilities with the region and research excellence (open for all participants); the Energy NCP-Network C-Energy+ contributed to this session by presenting funding possibilities in the frame of the FP7- and the CIP-Programmes;
- one closed session for the participants from the Western Balkan countries (“Consultation session”) on the identification of regional research priorities in the field of energy as input to regional specialisation and input to strategy development.

Background Reports on Energy

The consultation session was thoroughly prepared by background reports on the Energy S&T systems and priorities of the Western Balkan countries in the field of energy. These reports were prepared by energy experts from the region.

LINK Download the reports ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/document/9828>

The Regional Research Priorities identified during the consultation session in the field of Energy are (no preference is given by the order):

- Integral management of river basins
- Bio gas production from waste
- Second generation bio-fuels
- Small hydro-grid connection, system integration, operation and control
- Geothermal heat-pumps in energy efficient buildings
- Zero energy buildings

Cross-Cutting Priorities identified are:

- Coordination of national R&D projects and funding – regional R&D Fund according to Era-Net model
- Regional Cooperation Council – Western Balkan Innovation Fund coordination

Follow up and next steps

During the discussion, possible topics from the draft FP7 Energy Work Programme 2013 were identified based on the interest and the strengths of the Western Balkan countries. “Follow-Up” Coordinators were nominated by the group in order to work on a possible proposal submission under a future call of the Work Programme 2013.

The next steps for the Follow-Up Coordinators include the coordination of interested partners in the Western Balkan countries and the EU Member States in view of consortium building for possible proposal writing. The publication of the orientation paper, the final version of the Energy Work Programme 2013 and the publication of the calls in July 2012 have to be monitored carefully. Attending the Information Day to be held in Brussels on July 4 and 5, 2012 is crucial when planning to submit a proposal in an upcoming call, as well as getting support by the NCPs from the region.

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LINKS Find the agenda and presentations here ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/event/9582>
Videos available: WBC-INCO.NET at E2C Maastricht ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/news/3532>



Participants of the Consultation Session in the field of Energy in front of the Maastricht Town Hall



News from Albania

Business Plan Competition Project in Albania 2012

As part of the OECD's Western Balkans Regional Competitiveness Initiative (RCI), a three-year project supported by the European Commission with the aim of improving competitiveness in Western Balkan economies through support for innovation and human capital development, the Albanian Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Energy (METE) and the OECD Investment Compact for South East Europe on April 27, 2012 organised the official launch of the Albania Business Plan Competition.

The Competition's overarching goal is to promote entrepreneurship and innovation in Albania, as well as to connect promising business ideas with expertise, contacts, and potential sources of financing. This is the first time a Business Plan Competition was held in Albania, a country with a strong entrepreneurial spirit.

The growth and diversification of Albania's economy will depend upon the development of a vibrant entrepreneurial culture. Starting a business not only requires a good idea. It requires a logical and structured plan which will be used to attract potential investors to finance a business idea. The Albania Business Plan Competition is being organised in an effort to assist Albania's promising entrepreneurs in taking the first steps to start up their own businesses.

At the official launch, the different groups of interest had the opportunity to learn more about the competition's rules and procedures, key dates, and also prizes for the top three business plans. They also had the opportunity to learn what makes a good business plan.

The objectives of the project are to:

- Promote entrepreneurship and inspire potential entrepreneurs
- Connect promising business ideas with sources of financing and business contacts
- Make business innovation happen

Stages of the competition

The project is to be developed through three stages:

- In Round 1, applications are due by **June 15**, and the top 40 projects will be selected to proceed to Round 2.
- In Round 2, candidates will be mentored by consultants and experts in the preparation of their business plans. Fully written-up business plans meeting professional standards can be submitted until **September 14**, and only the top 10 will proceed to Round 3.
- In Round 3, Award Ceremony Teams deliver presentations of their business plans, and in **November** the best three teams will win prizes to help them set up their businesses.

The OECD Investment Compact will provide technical assistance such as Business Consulting, Feasibility Studies, Market Research, and Strategy Development to the three best business plans at a value of € 8,000, € 6,000, and € 4,000, respectively.

The winners will also have the opportunity to be introduced to fund managers active in the South East Europe region.

Eligibility Criteria

The eligibility criteria and rules for the Competition were developed to ensure compliance with the objectives of the Albania Business Plan Competition. They are based on similar business plan competitions organised in OECD member countries and on what was deemed to be good practice in similar initiatives.

Have you got a business idea you want to make a reality?
Are you trying to get your new business started?

ENTER THE ALBANIA BUSINESS PLAN COMPETITION 2012

First Prize €8000
Second Prize €6000
Third Prize €4000

Prizes are in the form of business support: consulting services, feasibility studies, market research, and strategy development.

- Expert mentoring
- Introductions to local and international financiers
- Business support services to turn your business idea into reality!

Apply online in Albanian or English at www.aida.gov.al by Friday 15th June

AIDA, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Energy, OECD Investment Compact for South East Europe, European Union

- Applicant teams should have at least two members and at least half the members should be Albanian nationals.
- Non-Albanian nationals living in Albania may be members of the management team and participate in the elaboration of the business plan; however, only Albanian nationals may be team leaders and may be invited to present the plan in the final event of the competition. Only Albanian nationals may be named chief executive officer (or equivalent) in the project.
- For the sake of simplicity in communications, teams must designate only one team leader, who will be the main contact point between the team and the organisers of the Competition.
- The composition of a team may change during Round 2 of the competition, as long as the team keeps at least two members and at least half of those members are Albanian nationals. The composition of a team may not change after Round 2.
- Women entrepreneurs are especially encouraged to apply; however, gender and gender composition will not be used as criteria for the participation and judgement of projects.
- Teams having won any prizes in other Business Plan Competitions are not eligible to participate.

Applicants must meet all requirements and rules to participate at all stages of the competition. Any application can be excluded by the organisers at any stage of the competition.

A Project Team has been established to rule final decisions in case of controversy.

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LINKS *Business Plan Competition Project, Albania* ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/project/10038>
Ministry of Economy, Trade and Energy – Albania ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/organisation/8178>



News from Bosnia and Herzegovina

InnoBiH Conference

The Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the OECD Investment Compact for South East Europe organised the “InnoBiH Conference” on Triple Helix Partnerships between academia, business, and government. The conference was held in Sarajevo on May 3, 2012 and gathered representatives of three triple helix institutional spheres in BiH and the international organisations in BiH.

As part of the Regional Competitiveness Initiative, the OECD IC SEE supports the government of Bosnia and Herzegovina in implementing “Triple Helix Partnerships” in the agri-food sector. In 2011, three concrete and innovative partnerships were selected to receive OECD technical support. These are:



InnoBiH Conference

- “Introduction of Omega-3 eggs on the BiH market” – a partnership between the Biotechnical Faculty at the University of Bihać, business partner “Posavina Koka”, and the Food Safety Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- “Processing field peas into pea proteins, starch, and cellulose fractions” – a partnership between the Entrepreneurial Centre at the University of Banja Luka, Republic Srpska, the SME Development Agency, and the business partner “HPK A.D.”; and
- “Organic disinfection product” – a partnership between the business partner “KIKO”, the Veterinary Faculty at the University of Sarajevo, and the RS Ministry of Science and Technology.

The conference discussed future measures and activities that could be undertaken in BiH to continue strengthening the links between government, research, and business communities according to the triple helix model of cooperation.

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LINK Ministry of Civil Affairs of BiH ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/organisation/9012>

Bilateral cooperation between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro

In the framework of the bilateral Agreement on scientific and technological cooperation between Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina (the Agreement in force since December 1, 2008), the first meeting of the Joint committee for scientific and technological cooperation was held in the capital of Montenegro, Podgorica.

Ms. Smiljana Prelević, Secretary of the Ministry of Science of Montenegro, and Ms. Biljana Čamur, Assistant to the Minister for Science and Culture in the Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, signed a protocol that defines the administrative and financial framework for the realisation of joint projects and cooperation programmes for the next two years.



Delegations of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro

The Joint Committee accepted 15 out of 17 project applications covering different scientific fields, with total annual funding in the amount of € 45,000. The next call for joint projects will be announced by March 15, 2013.

The meeting was an occasion for the delegations of both countries to exchange information on national priorities and strategic objectives in the field of RTDI, as well as on participation in international programs and projects, in particular the 7th EU Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP7), COST and EUREKA.

The delegations expressed their great pleasure to have established bilateral scientific cooperation between the two countries, which is of interest to the scientific community of Montenegro and the scientific community of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

LINK Ministry of Civil Affairs of BiH ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/organisation/9012>

Promotion of publishing activities of the Federal Ministry of Education and Science (FMES) at the “International Book and Teaching Aids Fair 2012”

At the 24th International Book and Teaching Aids Fair the FMES presented its two publishing projects: “The Archaeological Guide of Herzegovina” and “The Collection of scientific papers written with the financial support of the FMES throughout period of 2001–2008”. “The Archaeological Guide of Herzegovina” won the best book design award at the Fair.

FMES provides continuous support to the development of publishing and library activities to academics and scientific institutions. This support covers publishing of scientific, professional and university literature, scientific journals, collections of papers and bibliographies. The FMES supports the inclusion of the libraries and scientific institutions in the library-information system and the access to the international scientific databases.

In the period 2007–2011, more than € 1m was invested in publishing activities under various supporting measures and programmes of the FMES. At the same time, approximately 650 titles of scientific and university literature and magazines were donated to the libraries.

LINK Federal Ministry of Education and Science ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/organisation/9863>



News from Croatia

Science and Innovation Investment Fund – SIIF

The economic growth of the Croatian economy depends on the successful transformation of research results and knowledge to commercially exploitable products and technologies. Successful integration into new markets therefore requires a shift towards a knowledge economy where relationship between science, technology, and the economy are interrelated more than ever before.

The donor community, and in particular the European Union, support Croatia in its efforts to improve the innovation climate and to encourage the commercialisation of research results. EU assistance is channelled through a number of IPA-funded projects, mostly funded through the *Ilc component (Regional Competitiveness Operational Programme 2007–2009)*.

In the field of innovation and technology transfer, one of the most important tools foreseen in the operational programme is the “*Science and Innovation Investment Fund*” (SIIF). SIIF is implemented by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports of Croatia within two EU-funded projects – the *SIIF grant-scheme and Technical Assistance to SIIF*. The *SIIF grant-scheme* project was launched on May 28, 2009 and *Technical Assistance to SIIF* on January 4, 2010, with the goal of helping SIIF in project pipe-line building through trainings and advisory services for project applicants, providing on-going help for grantees during the implementation period of the projects. The Technical Assistance period is foreseen until July 2012.

The Science and Innovation Investment Fund is an IPA-funded grant scheme with the objective of building technology transfer and commercialization capacities of Higher Education Institutions (HEI) and Public Research Organisations (PRO) in Croatia. Two Calls for proposals have been published so far, with a total allocation of over € 10m.

Beneficiaries of the **first call** include a number of successful projects: the project “*Technology mapping at University of Zagreb*”, beneficiary University of Zagreb. The project includes five partners at the University of Zagreb: the Faculty of Agriculture, the Faculty of Chemical Engineering and Technology, the Faculty of Food Technology and Biotechnology, the Faculty of Science, and the School of Medicine; and three associates: the Croatian Agency for SMEs (HAMAG), the Croatian Chamber of Economy, and the Croatian Employers Association. The overall objective of the project is to strengthen technology transfer and commercialization capacities of the University of Zagreb in order to contribute to sustainable regional development and industry competitiveness of high value added sectors of the economy and knowledge-based industry and SME's in Croatia.



4th Training for representatives of the University of Zagreb, organised within the project “*Mapping Technology at the University of Zagreb*”, held 2011

The project “*Development of infrastructure for providing opportunities for research, technology transfer, and innovation in Karlovac – Interpid*” was financed by EU pre-accession IPA IIC (Regional Development – Regional Competitiveness) programme in the amount of € 1,040,110. The project aimed at building the capacity for technology transfer and commercialization of applied research in order to contribute to industrial competitiveness, the development of small and medium knowledge-based enterprises, and to support commercialization of innovation and of results of joint research by the Polytechnic school in Karlovac, and by small and medium enterprises.

The **second call**, currently being under evaluation, was divided into two lots, each with a specific priority:

- **Lot 1:** Improvement of regional and national innovation system through development of professionally facilitated technology-transfer services across regional or national networks of HEIs and/or PROs.
- **Lot 2:** Enhancement of the science-industry/business collaboration in order to enable the HEIs and PROs to effectively interact with business sector and thus to better serve the needs of industry.

Both Lots envisaged a wide range of activities, divided into groups, to be implemented in parallel:

Lot 1:

- Assistance in technology and product development (development of the proposal(s) for the new and innovative technology transfer activities; creation of research projects/R&D activities in cooperation with industry/business stakeholders/Associates, etc.)
- Capacity building for upgrade and development of services (self-development of project personnel, training for development of competences and skills relevant for commercialization and innovation support, study visits, staff exchange, etc.)
- Commercialization and technology transfer
- IPR management
- Networking
- Awareness raising

Lot 2:

- Research result-related activities
- Knowledge diffusion and networking activities.

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Science and Innovation Investment Fund (SIIF) ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/organisation/8156>
Regional Competitiveness Operational Programme 2007–2009 ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/document/7227>



News from the FYR of Macedonia

Focus on INNOVATION

Three strategic innovation related documents in preparation

“Innovations as a fundamental concept for economic development are of exceptional significance for any modern economy, including the Macedonian”, stated the Minister of Education and Science, Pance Krlev, at the opening of the Forum for Innovations, held in Skopje in November 2011.

The Macedonian government strongly supports all efforts towards building up appropriate perspectives for an innovation- oriented society in compliance with the Europe 2020 Strategy – Flagship Initiative Innovation Union and the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation “Horizon 2020”.

The most important development is **the Innovation Strategy of the Republic of Macedonia 2012–2020**, in cooperation with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). It is designed to create a coherent approach towards stimulation and motivation of innovations within both the academic and the business communities.

The second strategic document in which FYR of Macedonia is actively involved is the **Regional Strategy for Research and Innovation**, under the auspices of the Regional Research Council and the World Bank as its leader. The grant for this project comes from the IPA. All WB countries are expected to strongly contribute to the development of this strategy. It is designed to



Pance Krlev at the opening of the Forum for Innovations, Skopje November 2011

strengthen the innovative capacity of the Western Balkan Countries by stimulating research and development, using the regional potential. It foresees interconnection of research institutes, pooling resources, training scientists, and transferring knowledge across the region to increase its competitiveness.

The third one, which is in the adoption phase, is the **National Programme for Research and Development 2011–2016**. It defines the progress directions and scientific and research priorities of the country in relation to overall growth and prosperity.

Innovation-related activities are mainly focused on the universities and the academic community, but also the private sector. The expectations are that they will merge through the innovation strategies.

“Detour: Europe via Community Programmes”

On March 5, 2012 a promotion of the Research Study *“Detour: Europe via Community Programmes”* was organized in the EU Info Centre. Academia, the business sector, and the media participated in the event sharing knowledge and experiences about the Community programmes, lessons learned, and future aspects.

The study was carried out by the European Fund for the Balkans, in cooperation with relevant ministries and other stakeholders. It presented the importance of the Community Programmes for the EU integration process of the FYR of Macedonia.

Research has shown that in terms of scope and number of approved projects, Macedonia’s participation in Community Programmes can be assessed as successful, which is primarily due to the fact that beneficiaries are well-networked organisations with profiled strategies and previous experience in implementing EU projects.

The analysis has identified the absence of a national developmental strategy and relevant sectoral policies, which is a systematic obstacle for better and more effective absorption of EU funds. This is reflected in the absence of adequate national financial instruments needed to support analysis-targeted policies.

For the purpose of effective utilization of available funds, FYR of Macedonia has to implement a broad consultation process and it has to define its development strategy in compliance with Europe 2020. This process should be complemented with sector-specific developmental policies and relevant national financial instruments that would make due consideration of Community Programmes, and in particular of IPA, as complementary instruments to attain the goals and objectives defined therein. The state should reconsider the establishment of an earmarked fund that would be used to finance projects and that could be sustained from additional taxes levied on lottery games. The study has shown that the country is most successful in FP7, with a total of 71 approved projects.



Promotion of the Research Study “Detour: Europe via Community Programmes”

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Download the research study “Detour: Europe via Community Programmes” ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/document/9987>



News from Montenegro

Admission of Montenegro to EUREKA membership

A delegation of the Ministry of Science, upon the invitation of the Hungarian delegation, attended the EUREKA High Level Group meeting, on January 26, 2012 in Sopron, Hungary. Deputy Minister of Science, Mr. Darko Petrusić, after a brief presentation of the current situation in Montenegro in the field of research and innovation, explained the request for membership of Montenegro in the EUREKA programme. Application for membership of Montenegro in the EUREKA programme by the present members at the meeting was accepted very positively. Special support for admission to EUREKA was given by Hungary, Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia. The full membership of Montenegro in the EUREKA programme is expected by the middle of this year.

The Government of Montenegro and the World Bank signed a loan agreement aimed at advancing science and higher education in Montenegro

On February 22, 2012, Montenegro's Finance Minister, Milorad Katnić, and the Head of the World Bank Office for Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina, Anabel Abreu, signed a loan agreement aimed at the reform of higher education and building science capacities in Montenegro. The loan, worth € 12m, will be used for funding the project entitled "Higher education and research for innovation and competitiveness". The aim of the project is to improve higher education, science, and research in Montenegro through financial reforms, providing quality higher education and strengthening research capacities and development.

Results of the Call for national scientific research projects

Ministry of Science in cooperation with: Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Ministry of Health, Ministry for Information Society and Telecommunications, Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism, Ministry of Education and Sports, and Ministry of Culture finance 104 national scientific research projects from April 2012. These seven ministries jointly finance projects of basic, applied, and developmental research, which are in line with the Strategy for scientific research activity (2008–2016) and priority areas in research, established by the Ministry of Science, namely: Energy; Identity; Information and Communication Technologies; Competitiveness of the national economy; Medicine and human health; Science and education; New materials, products and services; Sustainable development and Tourism; Agriculture and food; and Transportation. Ministry of Science implemented assessment procedure for each individual project application (in total 198 applications) by at least two experts from abroad. The success rate of accepted projects is 52.5%.

Flash news from the Ministry of Science

On December 28, 2011, the annual press conference of the Ministry of Science was held and the annual prizes for scientific achievements for 2011 were awarded. The winners of annual awards for scientific achievements in 2011 are:

- Janko Radulović – for most successful young researcher talent, 20 years old
- Marko Dokić – for most successful young researcher, 35 years old
- Srđan Stanković – manager of scientific research programme or project and the research team that realised the most successful national project



Ministerial Conference on Horizon 2020, February 2012

- Irena Orović – for most successful woman in science
- Zoran Ilinčić – inventor-innovator of the most successful and patent innovative solution

The Minister of Science, Sanja Vlahović participated

- at the first PAR International Leadership Conference, in the organisation of Business Academy Rijeka, Croatia, Iacocca Institute, USA and Lehigh University, USA. Minister of Science, Sanja Vlahović spoke on the topic: Leadership – factor of success in XXI century.
- in the Ministerial Conference on Horizon 2020, the next EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, on February 1–2, 2012. The Conference was dedicated to political discussions between European research ministers and key global and European stakeholders within research and innovation.
- at the 13th Bled Forum on Europe – Beyond Smart, Inclusive and Sustainable, on March 29–30, 2012. She was one of the key notes speakers. She stressed the need for building cooperation, networks that create synergies, and expressed the importance of cooperatively building future visions.

The Futures Committee of the Bled Forum selected Mr. Milan Marić, chair of the Montenegro Node of the Millennium Project, Country Manager of S&T Montenegro, to receive an award in respect to the 13th Bled Forum on Europe Foresight Conference. Mr Milan Marić received the Bled Forum award for translating and publishing the 2011 State of Future in Montenegro.

A delegation of the Ministry of Science participated in the Conference Excellence Revisited – The Value of Excellence, which brought together policymakers, stakeholders, researchers, senior university administrators, and students to discuss excellence and exchange ideas, on April 18–20, 2012.

At the Joint Committee Meeting between Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina, held in Podgorica on March 22, 2012, fifteen bilateral projects were accepted for financing. All five bilateral Montenegrin-Chinese projects were positively evaluated.

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LINK Ministry of Science ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/organisation/8185>



News from Serbia

Scientists – great potential of Serbia

The Director General of the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN), Rolf Heuer paid an official visit to Serbia on March 27, 2012. Following discussions with the Minister of Education and Science, Žarko Obradović, Mr. Heuer visited the Faculty of Physics in Belgrade. During the visit to the Faculty, Mr. Heuer said that the scientists are a great potential of Serbia despite the lack of modern equipment and that Serbia will have a major benefit of joining CERN.



Official visit to Serbia by Rolf Heuer, Director General (CERN)

Serbian President Boris Tadić met with Mr. Heuer as well. Tadić stressed the importance of associate membership in CERN for Serbian scientists, universities, and institutes. The Serbian president said that joining such a project accelerates research and provides an opportunity for economic development. The Meeting with Mr. Heuer was also attended by the Secretary of State Radivoje Mitrović, and Assistant Minister Snezana Pajović.

Celebration of the 125th Anniversary of the Astronomical Observatory

On April 9, 2012, the Astronomical Observatory of Belgrade (AOB) celebrated its 125th anniversary. The ceremony, which took place in the library of the AOB, was attended by numerous distinguished guests. On this occasion, the Minister of Education and Science, Žarko Obradović expressed satisfaction with the fact that Serbia has the Astronomical Observatory as a scientific institution with such a long tradition. Among other guests, the celebration was attended by the President of the Serbian Academy of Science and Arts, Nikola Hajdin and the Director of the AOB, Zoran Knežević.



Celebration of the 125th Anniversary of the Astronomical Observatory

The Best Technological Innovation Competition 2012

The Ministry of Education and Science, together with the Chamber of Commerce and Faculty of Technical Sciences in Novi Sad is organising “The best technological innovation competition 2012”. The objective of this competition is to promote enterprising spirit among researchers, students and innovators, creative individuals, economic societies as well as the whole interested public. The Ministry has provided RSD 5.5m for awards and prizes. The deadline for submission of proposals was May 15, 2012.

LINK *Best Technological Innovation Competition in Serbia* ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/link/6569>

Ministry of Education and Science – Innovation projects activities

In December 2011, the Ministry of Education and Science launched the 4th call for proposals supported by the Law on innovation activities for legal entities and registered innovators. Out of 211 submitted project applications of registered legal entities, 174 applications were evaluated by national reviewers, and the list for financing from the national budget are published by the end of May. Out of 66 submitted applications of individual innovators, 25 are on the list for financing from the national budget.

LINK *Ministry of Education and Science, Serbia* ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/organisation/8420>

Innovation Fund activities (December 2011–May 2012)

In December 2011, the Serbian Innovation Fund launched its first call for proposals under the MINI grants program for financing innovative start-ups. Out of 58 project proposals, a total of 43 eligible applications were examined by international reviewers. 11 projects were selected for financing in the total amount of € 820,000. In parallel, the Innovation Fund launched its first call for proposals under the MATCHING grants programmes which aims to expand collaboration opportunities for innovative micro and small companies in the Republic of Serbia. Both programmes are being financed through the Innovation Serbia Project, an € 8.4m project which is funded by the EU Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) allocated for Serbia in 2011, and administered by the World Bank. The next deadline for application for both programmes is August 31, 2012.

LINK *Serbian Innovation Fund* ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/link/9988>

Western Balkan Enterprise Development and Innovation Facility (December 2011–May 2012)

On December 7, the Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF) Steering Committee approved financing for the Western Balkan Enterprise Development and Innovation Facility (EDIF). EDIF is a regional project proposed by Serbia on behalf of the beneficiaries and by the European Investment Fund (EIF) and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) on behalf of the financiers. The main goals of this Facility are to improve access to finance for SMEs through four complementary mechanisms of support: **the Enterprise Innovation Fund (ENIF), the Enterprise Expansion Fund (ENEF), the Guarantee Facility (GF) and Technical Assistance (TA Facility)**, which aims at improving the regulatory framework for supporting innovative SMEs with high growth potential as well as to stimulate the venture capital market. In the meantime, all WB countries have been asked to nominate institutions which will coordinate their participation in EDIF, and preparation of all project components is underway. A coordination meeting was held in Sarajevo on March 24, 2012 to discuss the next steps, such as activities to be covered under the TA facility and governance of EDIF.

LINKS *Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF)* ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/link/9989>
Western Balkan Enterprise Development and Innovation Facility (EDIF) ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/project/9990>

Monitoring of funded projects in SEE-ERA.NET PLUS



With the first interim report of funded projects in 2011, the progress of the funded projects was assessed and the monitoring of the project implementation was continued with a dedicated monitoring meeting successfully held in Vienna on April 23–24, 2012.

All coordinators attended the meeting and presented in 4 concurrent panels the achievements of the projects. Short presentations by the coordinators – using a predefined set of questions – were followed by lively discussions among the coordinators. Although many of the projects started with a delay of several months, most of the objectives of the projects could be achieved. In a joint session, all coordinators were invited to give feedback on the administrative processes of the projects and the support provided by the Joint



Participants of the Monitoring Meeting in Vienna, April 23–24, 2012

Call Secretariat. The meeting was also used to clarify open administrative matters directly with the coordinators. The results of a survey addressed to funded partners in the 23 projects were presented by the SEE-ERA.NET PLUS coordinator (ZSI).

For the set-up of future joint funding activities by the funding partners, a lot could be learned; this concerns mainly the difficulty of monitoring the spending by the Joint Call Secretariat – given the variety of funding rules in the countries participating. An important question was how coordinators can effectively deal with the rules during project implementation, namely to provide sound reporting of partners' spending to the Joint Call Secretariat. In view of the outcome of funded projects, further planned activities of WBC-INCO.NET were presented during the monitoring meeting focusing on the utilization and commercialization of research results.

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LINK SEE-ERA.NET PLUS ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/project/8040>

Successful cooperation in SEE-ERA.NET PLUS funded projects – a view from inside

During the SEE-ERA.NET PLUS monitoring meeting in Vienna, the coordinator of the project SEELEGUMES, Branko Ćupina (Professor at the University of Novi Sad, Faculty of Agriculture, Serbia), and the coordinator of the project ThermalMapper, Andreas Nüchter (Professor at Jacobs University Bremen, School of Engineering and Science), shared their experiences for the WBC-INCO.NET journal in short interviews highlighting once again the importance of cooperation and knowledge transfer in STI.

Concerning the number of project partners and compared with ThermalMapper, whose consortium includes a total of 3 institutions (2 from WB countries), SEELEGUMES is a very comprehensive project, including 9 institutions from WB countries, 6 partners from EU countries, and 4 associate partners from Armenia, Finland, and Russia. Even if SEELEGUMES started with a significant delay, to a certain extent causing lasting consequences in some cases (in particular for institutions involved in molecular characterisation), most of the objectives have been achieved so far. Timely reactions of the coordinating team were essential in this regard.

However, Ćupina and Nüchter both confirmed that good cooperation among the involved partners within their projects contributed to a high extent to the project's success so far.

As Mr. Nüchter remarked, a north-south disparity as regards the funding, basic equipment and materials available in research institutions as well as the know-how is still existent in WBC. In order to overcome the challenges, also when Croatia joins the EU next year, *“the research cooperation between EU countries and other WBC is highly desirable and must be further supported”*, he added. Mr. Nüchter further highlighted the importance of networking in the field of science and research in general and encourages the colleagues from WB countries to visit conferences and other relevant events in their country and abroad but also to present their research papers to a wider public: *“One should never skimp on the travel costs!”*, he said.

Mr. Ćupina addressed further the importance of knowledge transfer and of establishing new co-operations with other regional, European and international projects and networks. In the case of the SEELEGUMES project: *“The transfer of knowledge on legume genetic resources obtained through different international past as well as running projects was one of the initial drivers of the project success.”*

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With special thanks to Mr. Ćupina and Mr. Nüchter.

LINK Funded projects in SEE-ERA.NET PLUS ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/link/10061>

SEELEGUMES – “Sustainable preservation of indigenous South East European legumes and their traditional food and feed products” – a project funded in the field of AgroFood

The strategic goal of this project is to establish an efficient, functional, and sustainable network on the genetic resources of annual legume species in the countries of SEE and to enable it to be fit into the similar existing EU and other international networks.

ThermalMapper – “Thermal 3D Modeling of Indoor Environments for Saving Energy” – a project funded in the field of ICT for energy efficiency

Heat and air conditioning losses in buildings and factories lead to a large amount of wasted energy. To prevent such losses, a precise digital model of heat distribution and heat flow is needed. The project ThermalMapper aims at constructing precise thermal 3D models of indoor environments.

Institutional and research capacity developments in Kosovo*

*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

The Austrian Government supports institutional development in Higher Education and Research and the European Commission launches the first Call for Proposals for Research Projects in Kosovo*.

Start of “Higher KOS” project – Promoting Institutional Development in Higher Education and Research

The purpose of this 3-year project is to effectively and sustainably implement the principles of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in the public Kosovar Higher Education (HE) institutions and to sustainably enhance Kosovo’s integration into the European Research Area (ERA).

The intervention focuses on three thematic areas, leading to three expected results, each contributing to the above-mentioned objectives:

1. The quality of education offered at public HE institutions will be enhanced through improved and labour market-oriented teaching and learning (didactics, planning), and improved quality assurance mechanisms.
2. The system of research promotion in Kosovo* will be improved substantially through developing capacities and establishing a national research fund and administration that is functioning according to international standards.
3. Quality management and governance as well as administrative capacities of main stakeholders (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) and universities) will be further developed in order to be more efficient, transparent, effective, and customer-oriented.

The project is financed by the Austrian Development Cooperation and co-financed by the MEST. It is implemented by an Austrian consortium consisting of the lead partner World University Service Austria (WUS Austria), the Centre for Social Innovation (ZSI), and the Austrian Agency for International Mobility and Cooperation in Education, Science, and Research (OeAD).

The main research-related activities of the project are:

- A **scholarship fund** with the aim that ten PhD students complete PhD studies and five postdoc researchers are supported for research abroad. It is proposed that five PhD scholarships will be granted alongside the programmatic partnerships at Austrian institutions, five PhD scholarships and five post-doc fellowships will be granted for other universities.
- **Five programmatic partnerships** – possibly one per research priority field – between faculties or universities in Kosovo* and Austria – supporting the improvement of the quality of education. Partnership activities will last for at least one year.
- **Research Promotion in Kosovo*** – A strategic analysis and feasibility study about the establishment of a national agency for research promotion will be established by taking existing structures into account. Dedicated officers will be trained to advise interested Kosovan researchers on how to participate in the 7th European Framework Programme for RTD and “Horizon 2020”.
- **Ten trilateral collaborative research projects** with a duration of max. 15 months and a funding of max. € 15,000 per project will be implemented. The activities in the funded projects enable researchers from Austria, Kosovo*, and South Eastern European countries to work together on mutually beneficial science-driven projects and empower especially young researchers in Kosovo* to cooperate in international projects.



University of Prishtina Rectorate

Research Capacity Development in Kosovo*

The European Union Office to Kosovo on 17 October 2011 launched an open call for proposals to strengthen the research and innovation capacity in support of socio-economic development in Kosovo*.

Proposals were solicited from public and private research institutions in Kosovo* to meet one or more of the following specific objectives:

- to increase the quantity and quality of research performed by Universities and Research Institutes in Kosovo* in the priority research fields,
- to consolidate and increase the collaboration between networks of Kosovo* and European Research Institutions in the priority research fields,
- to promote the inter-institutional as well as inter- and trans-disciplinary collaboration and exchange,
- to make improvements in research facilities and equipment at the institutional level,
- to improve the capacity of Kosovo researchers, in particular young post-docs and PhD students of universities and research institutes in the priority research fields, through exchanges, internships, and research trainings, and
- to improve project management capacity both in terms of scientific and administrative capacity.

The priority research fields match those defined in the National Research Program 2010–2015: 1) Environment, Energy, and Natural Resources; 2) Agricultural Production and Food Safety; 3) Medical Research and public health; 4) Social sciences; 5) Information Technology.

The total amount made available under this Call is € 1m. The financial allocations range from € 150,000–250,000 with an expected contribution of at least 5% from other sources, whereas the duration of projects is between 18 and 30 months. The closing date for applications was January 25, 2012.

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An inspiring success story from FYR of Macedonia: Mr. Ilija Nasov on new ideas and novel applications



From the early stages in my life, I have been interested in doing something novel and original, something creative and unique, better than the existing technologies and products. I have always looked to improve things (in the area of my interest) and offer useful products and/or technologies that will benefit all mankind. With this in mind and concerned about the decrease of the level of fossil energy sources from day to day, I started intensively to look into alternative energy sources, particularly solar energy, and how I can contribute to resolving the global energy problem.

Having some novel ideas for improved collection of solar energy and its efficient transformation into heat, I founded *Plasma Ltd.* together with two business co-partners. Today Plasma Ltd. is a privately-owned company, focusing on leading-edge research and innovation in the area of **solar energy** and **surface engineering**. Most of the efforts of the Plasma team and the financial resources are directed towards the development of novel technologies, processes, and particularly a variety of tailor-made coatings for solar panels as well as for surface engineering in other industrial and functional application. Lately, Plasma's special coatings have been intensively explored to be applied in the food industry, for polymer-based composite solar collectors, CPC composite reflectors, and also for bio-degradable food packaging. This requires Plasma to stay abreast of new materials and technologies; therefore, we try to be aware of the academic and industrial trends going on in the area of materials science and engineering, surface engineering, nanotechnologies, thin films and coatings, etc.

Our knowledge and expertise expand on a daily basis by participation in numerous international meetings, workshops, exhibitions, congresses and conferences, attending special training and education courses, and via collaboration with leading research institutes, companies, and universities in the region and internationally.

The generation of new ideas and novel applications, envisioned by the Plasma team, has resulted in successful application for several national projects, sponsored by the Ministry of Education and Science in FYR of Macedonia. This has led Plasma to win the Balkan Award, organized by the World Bank of Innovative projects in 2006. The national projects' results and outcome were an outstanding motivation and stimulus for us; the successful execution of the national projects gave us more confidence to go ahead and apply for international project calls. Surprisingly, we found that we actually possess extensive knowledge and expertise in the area of surface engineering that is competitive on an international level.

In this context, I would like to mention the project grant obtained through the Austrian Agency for Development, whose focus was on the incorpora-



Ilija Nasov

tion of solar thermal collectors in façades and roofs of residential buildings and houses.

Also, we have completed successfully **two EUREKA projects**. Our international partners recognized our expertise and efforts, which led to getting financial support for **five FP7 projects** supported by the European Commission. Within these projects, we have started collaboration with proven EU institutions and world-class scientists and business partners.

About two years ago, our expertise in the solar thermal collectors resulted in the founding of a new company: *Camel Solar*. It mainly focuses on manufacturing different types of solar collectors with improved efficiency and novel designs. The original solution of absorbers with better heat transfer in vacuum-tube collectors, as well as flat-plate collector absorbers with the highest heat-transfer coefficient without a humidity issue, found attractive applications – starting from the standard uses to those in façades and windows module.

As a Professor appointed at different Departments at a number of local Universities, I also teach several courses in the areas of Surface Engineering, Solar Energy, and Management of Innovations, where, among other topics, I try to transfer my experience of successful application for FP7 R&D projects to my students and colleagues.

I would like to give my personal opinion for a successful FP7 project application:

- 1) possess a high level of knowledge and expertise in the area of project application (i.e. always be aware of the state-of-the-art in your field);
- 2) be creative with ideas for a better, competitive eco-product or service in order to achieve a good position on the existing market;
- 3) the last, but not least important, have a motivation, be a self-starter, and think "out-of-the-box".

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Why success stories?

In this issue WBC-INCO.NET presents two success stories on innovation from the West Balkan – one coming from Albania and one from FYR of Macedonia while they both start with entrepreneurial researchers.

After many high-level meetings in which challenges have been discussed at the macro-level of countries and large regions, it can be refreshing and inspiring to go down once in a while to the micro-level of personal stories

and down-to-earth cases of real life situations. Partners in the project have been asked to suggest persons, projects or firms that come to mind when thinking of 'success & innovation'. The stories do not necessarily have to be high-tech or R&D intensive, and the stories may come from researchers or entrepreneurs, but also from policy makers or project managers. Besides offering inspiration and increasing awareness the showcases can provide a qualitative contribution to the analysis of the innovation system in WBC.

From mycelium to high quality mushrooms: An Albanian success in cooperation between university researchers and an entrepreneur

Prof. Dr. Jordan Merkuri and Prof. Assoc. Dr. Magdalena Cara of the Agriculture University of Tirana showed us their laboratory and told how they managed to produce the mycelium and to develop a methodology to grow the mushrooms. Together with these two proud, dedicated and passionate researchers we drove to the production farm near the coast (Divjaka) where the entrepreneurial farmer Irakli Shkoza showed how the production process and storage is organized and his son Enri Shkoza explained the marketing strategy of “Kerpudha e Divjakes” (Mushroom of Divjaka).

This Albanian success story starts 30 years back in Italy where Jordan Merkuri got his PhD. At the University in Bari and later in a company in Puglia he worked on the isolation of the *Pleurotus spp* fungal strain. Back in Albania he kept his dream to produce such high quality mushrooms alive by doing experiments in his free time. For the isolation of the strain he filed an Albanian patent. The use of straw that was gathered after trimming the vineyards appeared to be successful. Magdalena Cara is a chemical and pesticide specialist. Together with their team they wrote winning proposals for international and national projects and subsidies. In 2009 the Research Mycelium Laboratory at the Department of Plant Protection in Faculty of Agriculture and Environment in the Agriculture University of Tirana was built. Besides the success in isolating the fungal strain (of *Pleurotus ostreatus* & *Cardoncello* mushroom) in the lab and in reproduction of the strain they for instance also had to develop processes for multiplication and nitrification (for which they use grain) and for instance methods to disinfect the straw.



The results achieved in the laboratory are not only personal successes; also the improved environment at the university and the financial support from national and international projects and subsidies has contributed to this success. Concerning the university, in 1994 Plant Protection (PP) was incorporated into the Department of Horticulture, but in 2006 the PP section joined the PP Research Institute in 2006, creating the Department of plant Protection (DPP). DPP consists of 18 members: 12 academic staff and researchers, and 6 supporting staff. Magdalena Cara showed a long list of externally funded projects they had acquired, including for instance:



Magdalena Cara and Jordan Merkuri

- “Establishment of research laboratory for fungi micelle” (2009–2012; financed by MASH & AKTI, government funds via the Agency for Research Technology and Innovation);
- “Establishment of research laboratory for chemistry and pesticide” (2009–2010; financed by the World Bank);
- “International joint Master degree in Plant Medicine” (2010–2012, TEMPUS, 11 universities);
- “Exploration of Balkan biodiversity of *Capsicum spp.* to extract biotic stress resistant germplasm” (2010–2012; financed by SEE-ERA.NET PLUS).

These bilateral and multi-lateral co-operations resulted in a list of 23 international partnerships as a poster on the wall of the laboratory shows.

The mycelium produced in the lab we visited, is multiplied in another laboratory where it grows in bottles with grain. These bottles are brought to the production farm near the coast where the conditions are better. In a sort of tunnel tents plastic bags with straw hang above the ground in a shady, temperature and humidity controlled climate. At the places where holes have been made in the bags the mushrooms have grown in beautiful shapes. Yesterdays harvest

was discussed and the increased productivity was praised, but it can still improve. Irakli Shkoza explained how the production process is organized. First the straw is cut in small pieces, which in the beginning was done by hand, but now with a machine. The straw is put in barrels with water and chemicals for disinfection. For lifting the barrels they have to find a new, mechanical solution because it is rather heavy and when scaling up the production there are always bottlenecks to be improved. Across the road the mushrooms are cleaned, packaged and stored in a cooling-cell. In the beginning it was not easy to find clients, but a good move was to visit the top quality restaurants in Tirana, who are very satisfied.

The success of this cooperation is largely based on the personality, capacities and ambitions of each of these partners (and the fact that they never had a serious disagreement between each other), but it would not have been possible without the financial support which was received for the R&D. This also implies that writing good research and project proposals is an important quality for university researchers. Besides support for university R&D, it has by now also become appropriate to involve business support. Maybe the newly established Albanian Investment Development Agency (AIDA) or the Small Business Foundation could for instance support in solving some of the bottlenecks that appear when scaling-up the production at the farm or support in developing new markets. Business support from an intermediate organisation could also be relevant for the researchers concerning the question if, and how, a spin-off company could be established.

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CEI-Bloomberg Report on Next Generation Biofuels in CEI Region

In the framework of CEI activities in the field of Renewable and Sustainable Energy, which represent a priority for the Organisation, the Central European Initiative (CEI) has commissioned a Report to Bloomberg – New Energy Finance on “Next Generation Ethanol and Bioproducts: Opportunities in Central and Eastern Europe”.

Bloomberg, the world's most trusted source of data, news, analytic and trading tools for businesses and financial professionals, has acquired in 2009 New Energy Finance, the leading provider of independent analysis, data and news in the clean energy and carbon markets.

The report commissioned by the CEI, quite comprehensive but very conservative in its approach, elaborates two main scenarios:

1) a fuel-demand scenario showing what it would take to replace 10% of forecast gasoline demand by 2020 with next generation ethanol



supply according to EU legislation: reasonable but achievable penetration which does not even rely on significant changes to the existing vehicle fleet;

2) a residue-potential scenario showing how much gasoline could be replaced with next generation ethanol if only 17.5% of the available agriculture residue were used, i.e. without changing land use pattern (crop distribution) and current use of residue (also for soil protection and animal husbandry).

EVENT ANNOUNCEMENTS

1st Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region

November 27–28, 2012 in Regensburg, Germany

The first Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region will gather a wide audience comprising: representatives from the European institutions and bodies, relevant international organisations, national ministries, regional and local authorities; as well as representatives from the business sector (chambers of commerce, trade unions, companies, etc.), the academia (universities and research centres), civil society (NGOs, cultural organisations, etc.) and in general, all relevant stakeholders, in order to have a broad discussion and exchange of information about the state of play and further steps in relation to the EU Strategy for the Danube Region.

LINK <http://wbc-inco.net/object/event/9999>

East-meets-West on Innovation and Entrepreneurship Congress and Exhibition

September 1–4, 2012 in Nicosia, Cyprus

Organised by the European Office of Cyprus, the event will focus on harnessing the potential of entrepreneurship to transfer innovation ideas into products and services. Planned discussions will centre on innovative policy tools and measures to build the necessary human capital, infrastructure, and financial instruments to create and facilitate international cooperation. More specifically, the congress will seek to: improve links between scientific and business communities; promote private sector investment in science, innovation, and enterprise development and encourage small and medium-sized enterprises and scientists to exploit global knowledge resources and increase innovation financing mechanisms.

The event will take place under the auspices of the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the EU.

LINK <http://wbc-inco.net/object/event/5680>

Striking potential benefits of Next Generation Biofuels in the CEI region – according to the residue potential scenario of the Bloomberg Report which considers agricultural waste as feedstock only (for which cost-efficient technology is ready, and assuming no change in today's land use pattern and converting all agricultural residue available to bioenergy, i.e. 17.5% equal to 75 million dry tonnes by 2030) – are summarised as follows:

- Job creation, up to 580.000 man-years of employment in the years 2012–2030 and up to 36.000 permanent jobs predominantly in rural areas (collecting and transporting residue and operating bio-refineries);
- Innovation and economic growth, with an ethanol potential in 2030 of 30 billion litres per year, requiring a total investment of 40 billion Euro in 2012–2030 for a total revenue of +/–260 billion EUR in 2012–2050;
- Energy security, moving from high dependence on foreign oil towards greater self-sufficiency in fuel for transport;
- Environment Protection through a reduction of CO₂ emissions (around 40%) by replacing 61% of fossil gasoline in 2030 with next generation ethanol converted from agricultural residue.

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LINKS *Download the report* ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/document/9998>
Central European Initiative (CEI) ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/organisation/8475>
Bloomberg New Energy Finance ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/link/10030>

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 <http://wbc-inco.net/object/link/10060>

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