



Editorial

Dear readers,

The 10th edition of the WBC-INCO.NET Journal is published on the occasion of the 15th and last meeting of the Steering Platform on Research for the Western Balkan countries supported by WBC-INCO.NET, taking place in Zagreb, Croatia, on December 11/12, 2013. The cooperation in RTDI between all stakeholders in the region is growing continuously while a new programming “era” is on the horizon. The Platform will consequently focus on Horizon 2020; however, other topics, such as an update on regional cooperation issues, knowledge & technology transfer, smart regions, evaluation culture in SEE, etc., will be debated as well.

One of this issue’s highlights is the article about the Western Balkans Regional Research and Development (R&D) Strategy for Innovation that was adopted on October 25 in Zagreb. We report in depth about it on page 4 as the Strategy is the framework for a collective effort to recommend policy and institutional reforms and to promote the Western Balkans’ most urgent priority of increasing innovation, economic growth, and prosperity.

The Journal also deals with the South East Europe 2020 strategy by the Regional Cooperation Council. This document draws inspiration from the EU strategy Europe 2020 and aims at creating one million jobs by 2020. To make this happen, on page 4 and 5 it is clear that innovation, skills, and trade must be upgraded and national governments need to be far more efficient. Finally, we are also presenting you with a collection of news from the region as well as reports on different initiatives.

After almost 6 years, WBC-INCO.NET has entered its final phase. In order to celebrate and maximize our successes and results, a large final conference will be organized in Vienna, on March 27-28, 2014. Save the date in your agenda, since the conference will not only present WBC-INCO.NET results – such as our final publication – but it will also reflect on other initiatives in WBC, focusing on research and innovation. It will discuss the advantages offered by Horizon 2020 for the countries in the region and also offer you the possibility for extending your network of collaboration with a back-to-back brokerage event.

We wish you inspiring reading!

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Imprint

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14th Meeting of the Steering Platform, Budva, Montenegro

14th Steering Platform Meeting: Conclusions

The Steering Platform on Research for the Western Balkan Countries met in Budva on 5–6 June 2013. The meeting was co-chaired by the Irish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Montenegro – who hosted the event and co-chaired on behalf of the Western Balkan Countries and the European Commission.

Montenegro opened the meeting by welcoming all the members of the Platform to their country and expressed the hope that as co-chair they can be of use in moving forward the research and innovation agenda between the EU and the enlargement countries. Montenegro took advantage of the occasion to share with the Platform their experience in the accession negotiations on chapter 25 on science and research and the continued efforts they have taken at national level since the provisional closure of the chapter in December 2012. In its opening statement, the Irish Presidency outlined its experience as Member State since 1973 and encouraged all WBCs to make the necessary efforts to join the Union. The European Commission welcomed the opportunity to inform on latest developments in EU Research and Innovation policy and also to learn about progress made by the WBCs on national R&I capacity. Referring to the conclusions on international cooperation, adopted at the Competitiveness Council on 30 May, the EC invited all members of the Platform to consider how cooperation on R&I could be deepened with the enlargement.

The Platform welcomed the presentation from the Irish Presidency on the latest developments and the state of play on the next EU Research and Innovation programme “Horizon 2020”. It also took note of the conditions and procedure for association to “Horizon 2020”. It was underlined that a request or an expression of interest to associate was necessary in writing in order to launch the association procedure. All agreed that association is a good pre-accession tool but it was recognized that the decision should also be taken in full consideration of absorption capacity. DG ELARG underlined the impor-

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tance of including R&I as a priority sector in the Country Strategy Paper under preparation for the implementation of the next Pre-Accession Instrument (IPA II). The proposed support measures by the Commission were welcomed, in particular the support for project preparation and promotion of participation in Horizon 2020. The Platform asked to be kept closely informed on developments in the organisation of the National Contact Points for Horizon 2020. A follow-up meeting on association to "Horizon 2020", together with DG ELARG, was seen as useful.

In view of their possible association to "Horizon 2020", WBCs were also encouraged to step up efforts on R&I capacity at national level. Based on the presentation of the Progress Reports, it was encouraging to learn that the WBCs are in the process of revising their Law(s) on Research, Science and Technology and/or adopting national strategies on innovation and are working on S&T statistics. The variety of actions taken by the Member States and the countries associated to FP7 (Switzerland) in support of the Western Balkans, both on capacity building and offering cooperation opportunities on research and innovation and mobility of researchers, are all contributing to the objective of strengthening the R&I capacity. The support from other stakeholders, and notably the JRC, OECD, WBC-INCO.NET, SEE-ERANET Plus, RCC and CEI are also very precious for the Balkan Region. Sharing information on progress and actions in the Steering Platform was seen as a very useful exercise in creating synergies and considering further actions addressing the global value chain in line with EU policies and objectives. It was noted that the Platform played a key role, for example, in allowing WBCs to become familiar with the Smart specialisation strategy, which had been fully demonstrated by the Workshop on Smart specialisation organized by the WBC-INCO.NET in Belgrade in April 2013. The Platform welcomed the presentation which gave an update on the latest developments on the European Research Area. The WBCs were invited to carefully follow developments and contribute to the first Progress Report. The Steering Platform was pleased with the selection of the FP7 project Danube INCO.NET and expressed the hope that it will lead to more research opportunities for all WBCs. The Platform further welcomed the additional progress made in the EVAL-INNO project and underlined the importance of this project in preparing for Horizon 2020. Serbia recommended considering best practice, in particular. The Steering Platform was also satisfied with the announced prolongation of the duration of the WBC.INCO.NET as a means to support the WBCs in making the bridge from FP7 to Horizon 2020 and took note of the future activities, in particular the final Conference and Brokerage event to take place in Vienna on 27–28 March 2014.

In view of the termination of the WBC-INCO.NET (April 2014), all members of the Steering Platform underlined the importance of continuing the policy dialogue with the WBCs beyond the duration of this FP7 project. In this context, the Platform welcomed the possibility outlined by the RCC in its presentation of the SEE Europe 2020 strategy, which would include a Regional Platform on Research and Innovation to monitor progress on the SEE 2020 strategy related to R&I (smart growth pillar). This Regional Platform would also be responsible for the implementation of the proposed Regional strategy for research and innovation under preparation, with the support of the World Bank. It was noted that bringing the current Steering Platform under the auspices of the RCC would increase synergy and unite all actions under one forum. Given the importance of the Steering Platform from a pre-accession point of view, Members also asked to consider the possibility of ad-hoc support under IPA and/or "Horizon 2020" to ensure the uninterrupted continuation of the present Steering Platform and the dissemination of information that the WBC-INCO.NET has so far provided through the WBC Newsletter and website. Whatever solution was found, a real plea was made to continue the policy dialogue until the accession of all the WBCs to the EU.

The Steering Platform took note of the other actions taken at regional level, notably the presentation by the RCC of the Regional Strategy for Research and Innovation for the Western Balkans. The Platform, however, was not in a position to express its views on the proposed regional strategy, due to lack of detailed information on the joint initiatives. In view of the Ministerial Meeting in Skopje next July seeking endorsement of the Regional Strategy, the EC urged the WBCs to liaise with their representatives in the Steering body of the Regional Strategy. The Platform also took note of the pilot project outlined by the CEI on supporting the integration and strengthening of centres of excellence in the Balkans. Interested representatives were invited to join the meeting of the CEI focal points in Trieste on 9–10 July to discuss the proposal in more detail. The Platform took note of the establishment of the South East European Centre for Advanced Studies (CAS) in Rijeka and noted that the important topic of "New Challenges for Democracy: Exploring the Crisis of Trust and Legitimacy in Europe" will be addressed at the inaugural conference to be held in Rijeka on 16–18 October 2013.

The Platform was grateful for the presence of the Lithuanian Presidency at this meeting and is looking forward to preparing together the next Platform meeting. The brief outline of their Presidency Programme was also much welcomed as guidance for our future work.

LINK

Steering Platform Meeting in Budva ■

<http://wbc-inco.net/object/news/12331>

WBC-INCO.NET has entered its final phase

The WBC-INCO.NET project understands itself as a strategic body designed to deal with European, multilateral and regional issues of science, technology and innovation policies. It builds upon previous activities in WBC and acts in close cooperation with the members of the Steering Platform on Research for the WBC. After almost 6 years, WBC-INCO.NET has entered its final phase, lasting until April 2014.

Since the start of WBC-INCO.NET in 2008, partners from 16 different countries – ministries of science, RTDI and economy, respective agencies and research institutes from Western Balkan countries as well as from EU member states and associated countries, carried out different surveys and studies, drafted several national background reports, organized trainings and brokerage events, visited conferences in the region and throughout the EU, communicated with national and international stakeholders and officials, prepared policy papers and guidelines, supported the organisation of the Steering Platform on Research in WBC, organised innovation dialogue fora, organised

regional dialogue fora, implemented different dissemination activities towards national and international stakeholders in order to enhance the impact of project activities etc. etc. You are cordially invited to check our data bases and find out more about our results: <http://wbc-inco.net/object/projectresults>. As regarding our activities in 2013 and 2014 – please check this article: <http://wbc-inco.net/object/news/12333>.

Finally, in order to discuss our achievements and lessons learned, to look on current and planned initiatives in the region, to understand Horizon 2020

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and to extend the networks of collaboration – a large final conference back to back with brokerage event will be organised in Vienna, on March 27–28, 2014. Save the date in your agenda and check the page 16 of this journal for further information.

Through its portal www.wbc-inco.net and the bi-weekly e-newsletters, WBC-INCO.NET engages in information exchange on STI policy cooperation in and with the Western Balkan countries. It acts as a source of high quality targeted information on research in WBC and contributes to the integration of the research and innovation systems of the WBCs into the European Research Area (ERA). The access to our portal is free of charge and open to everyone interested in STI cooperation in and with WBC. With your user name and password you will have free access to different databases. You can sign up for an account here: <http://wbc-inco.net/register>.

Taking into account the great acceptance of the WBC-INCO.NET website and bi-weekly e-newsletter among the research community, policy and other relevant stakeholders in WBC, EU member states but also internationally (the website has currently – as of November 2013 – over 3540 registered users and bi-weekly newsletter reaches over 10.500 newsletter subscribers) the idea of maintenance of the website also after the project end is considered relevant. Thus, possibilities of maintenance and funding of the portal after the project end have been discussed among partners and relevant stakeholders. **If you are interested in supporting this idea, please let us know at office@wbc-inco.net.**

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Workshop for Enlargement countries to update on EU acquis on research and innovation policy (Brussels on 12–13 November 2013)

As part of the pre-accession strategy, DG ELARG sets funding aside for the other Directorate-Generals in the Commission to allow the line DGs to update the enlargement countries on the latest policy developments facilitating preparation and compliance with EU requirements and actions in view of EU membership. The Directorate for International Cooperation in DG Research and Innovation took advantage of this facility for the third time and invited experts from the Balkan Region and Turkey to update them on the latest developments on the European Research Area (ERA).

Last year the Workshop was devoted to the Innovation Union actions. This year the ERA was chosen because it continues to be the core business, so to speak, of the EU research and innovation policy. The Workshop focused on two key priorities of the recently adopted ERA Communication: (1) the importance of rendering the national research systems more effective and (2) the open labour market policy for scientists. Both topics were selected out of the five key priorities of ERA, because they contribute most to the overall target of increasing the level of investment in research and because the reforms in these areas also have a direct impact on participation under the next Union Research and Innovation programme “Horizon 2020” (2014–2020).

It was interesting to learn that all of the enlargement countries are currently in the process of reforming or designing their research and innovation policies and so the information on how actions are taken at EU level was both useful and timely, in particular for Serbia, with whom accession negotiations on EU research policy (chapter 25) will be opened soon and also Montenegro, as candidate country, who now has to demonstrate, on a regular basis, progress towards the EU targets.

It was also an occasion to meet with the new Director for International Cooperation, Cristina Russo, who wholeheartedly welcomed the enlargement countries and, in particular, their interest to become associated to Horizon 2020. She re-assured everybody that the Commission is committed to concluding these International Agreements on time.

As a result of this latest workshop, it is hoped that in the next ERA progress report, the enlargement countries will be more visible in ERA and that in taking actions at national level the policy-makers will be fully inspired by EU policy on research and innovation when reforming their national systems. In this context, the need for reliable data and statistics on S&T was recalled.



First Era Progress Report

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LINK ERA Progress Report 2013 ■ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/document/12943/>

Western Balkans Regional R&D Strategy for Innovation

Growth through Research and Innovation: the Moment for Action.

On October 25, 2013, the ministers responsible for science and education in the seven beneficiary countries from the Western Balkans – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo*, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia – met in Zagreb, Croatia, to sign a declaration endorsing the *Western Balkans Regional R&D Strategy for Innovation*. This is the first time that countries from the region have agreed on a common view on how to jointly address the challenges of the research and innovation sector in the region.

The Strategy, accompanied by the Action Plan, will serve as a framework for a collective effort to recommend policy and institutional reforms, and promote the Western Balkans' most urgent priority of increasing innovation, economic growth, and prosperity. This document will reflect a set of policy and institutional reforms that the beneficiary countries believe will increase the impact on the investments in research and innovation in a region. As its core, the document proposes to invest more and better to improve the quality of research and innovation and to create knowledge-based economies that will generate higher-value-added jobs and stronger growth. The target is to mobilise additional resources from public and private sources, the EU, and other stakeholders to reach an average of 1.5% of GDP on Gross R&D expenditures at the regional level by 2020.

The Strategy's Action Plan describes the joint investments to be undertaken by the Western Balkan countries. It proposes the creation of the Western Balkans Innovation Strategy Exercise (WISE) facility – a nonprofit organization that will support systematic capacity building, learning and policy improvement in the region. The facility is also expected to design and supervise the implementation of four proposed programs: a research excellence fund programme; the networks of excellence programme; the technology transfer

programme; and the early-stage start-up program – all to be implemented at the supra-national level.

At the Zagreb's signing ceremony, a preliminary consensus on how to implement the agreed Action Plan was achieved, with countries committing to meet bi-annually and to have Croatia as the host country for the WISE facility. The country plans to cover for administrative and infrastructure costs for at least the initial two years. Countries intend to submit a multi-beneficiary IPA project to finance part of the programs while additional EU funds may be considered as well (e.g. the Horizon 2020 programme). Bilateral donors, such as Norway, have expressed their interest in supporting the programme. The Regional Cooperation Council also plans to make available resources in the context of the implementation of the South-Eastern Europe 2020 Strategy.

The Strategy follows up on the Ministerial Conference, held in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina (2009), where a Joint Statement expressing the initial interest of the Western Balkans region in developing a joint strategy on research and innovation was developed. The work on the Strategy was supported by the World Bank and the European Commission and was financed through a Multi-beneficiary Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA).

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LINKS *WBs Regional R&D Strategy for Innovation* ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/news/13148>
World Bank ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/organisation/8465>

*) This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence

Background Brief on the SEE 2020 Strategy

Economic prosperity is essential to long-term stability and is a part of the European integration process. Recognizing this, the Governments of SEE have adopted an outline of a comprehensive cooperation agenda and mandated RCC to develop the South East Europe 2020 Strategy – a regional response to Europe 2020.

In 2011, the Ministers in charge of the Economy adopted the SEE 2020 Vision, laying out the region's growth and development priorities contained in five pillars – (i) integrated, (ii) smart, (iii) sustainable and (iv) inclusive growth, underpinned by (v) good governance. Adoption of the SEE 2020 Vision was followed in 2012 by the agreement on 11 regional headline targets backed up by 77 national targets to guide the common regional action towards the end of the decade. In addition to adopting these targets, the Ministerial held on November 9, 2012, in Tirana also mandated the RCC to coordinate the development of the SEE 2020 Strategy and present it for adoption in 2013.

Acting on this mandate, RCC has put forward a wide-ranging consultation process to build consensus around a set of priority measures and actions to be developed. Working with the government and regional and international partners, RCC has developed a proposal of the SEE 2020 Strategy, which was adopted by the governments and endorsed by the Ministers of Economy at their meeting in Sarajevo on November 21.

The five pillars of SEE 2020 are central to socio-economic policies of each SEE country and are also critical elements of the EU accession process.

Therefore, in essence, the SEE 2020 Strategy provides a framework to assist the governments of the region to implement their individual development strategies, including EU accession-related goals, by enhancing national efforts through focused regional cooperation on those specific issues that can benefit from a shared approach. A number of specific sector dimensions suitable for regional cooperation have been identified under each pillar, including the Research and Innovation dimension. Activities in these dimensions are expected to contribute to the achievement of the headline targets set for each pillar.

By championing the development of the SEE 2020 Strategy, RCC hopes to provide an anchor for regional reform and shift regional cooperation towards more coherent, results-oriented approaches. The ambitious nature of the SEE 2020 Strategy reflects the political will of the SEE governments to take a decisive step towards creating vibrant economies and thriving societies in each and every country of the region. SEE 2020 has the objective of engineering a pattern of job-rich growth, which will both help improve the labour market situation and contribute to raising living standards. The Strategy will also reinforce the countries' efforts to advance along their EU accession pathway.

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A highly ambitious goal has been set. The policy objectives and measures envisaged by the Strategy should contribute to the creation of some 1 million new jobs during the 2010s. By joining forces in the achievement of common goals and united by shared European values, South East Europe will succeed.

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LINKS SEE 2020 Strategy (adopted version) ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/document/13294>
Regional Cooperation Council ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/organisation/9310>

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region – an Additional Framework for Cooperation



The EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) focuses on the macro-regional cooperation among the different countries and regions from the upper Danube (Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, Austria, Czech Republic) along the river (Hungary, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, and Croatia) through the Western Balkan countries (WBC, i.e. Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro) towards the lower Danube (with the EU Member States Bulgaria and Romania, as well as Ukraine and Moldova).

The strategy covers different thematic aspects, structured into so-called “Priority Areas”, including Environment, Transport, Energy, etc. But there are also “horizontal” priorities, such as to increase competitiveness and to improve the knowledge society. Within the latter, an INCO-NET project has also been proposed and funded by the European Commission (EC). As WBC-INCO.NET will end in April 2014, a new Danube-INCO.NET is about to start in January.

Danube-INCO.NET will not be focused on the WBC but the Danube area. Nevertheless, its activities will target the region and provide a similar framework to support cooperation. The project will support the policy dialogue linking the different priority areas, as far as they are addressing research and innovation issues and coordinate multiple STI policy dialogue forums in the region and the implementation of flagship initiatives. It will furthermore address specifically relevant societal challenges in the region (i.e. energy/bio-economy) and improve networking, launching several clustering activities and concrete pilots, focusing on energy efficiency and renewable energy in a bio-based economy.

The project will support the coordination of funding mechanisms and funding partners in the region, supporting the Danube Region Research and Innovation Fund (DRRIF) and scaling up joint funding mechanisms towards a joint funding programme, while concrete actions will promote smart specialisation and Danube Transfer Centres as well as establish a communication platform. In this context, followers of the WBC-INCO.NET activities are warmly invited to use the opportunity to continue their networking in the broader geographical context. The project officially starts on January 1, 2014, and is again coordinated by the Centre for Social Innovation (ZSI) in Austria. Your inquiries may be directed to Ms. Elke Dall, coordinator@danube-inco.net.

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LINK The EU Strategy for the Danube Region ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/link/10303>

WBCInno – Modernization of WBC universities through strengthening of structures and services for knowledge transfer, research and innovation.

The WBCInno project has an overarching aim to contribute to the modernization of WBC universities through the strengthening of their management structures/services for cooperation with the world of business in the areas of knowledge transfer, research and innovation. It has as its ultimate goal the creation of strong entrepreneurial universities and innovative regions and is funded under TEMPUS IV programme.

Based on the comprehensive analysis of regional and national backgrounds, and as a result of capitalizing on the results of partners, the summarized perceived problems in this context in the WB region are: 1) Traditional organization of WBC universities has created a fragmentation of resources, with the absence of agreed priorities and focus; 2) There is no strategic innovation platform to provide the capitalizing of knowledge and research potential, or its coordination and mobilization to facilitate the development of an innovative region; 3) The linkages with enterprises are sporadic and individual, since there is no university office or other mechanism which provides single-point of access to university services; 4) There is no efficient web-based collaboration tool to facilitate the promotion of university resources and new ideas of students, or for matching them with financial facilitators. It seems clear that the main challenge for the countries in the WB region is to promote a reinforced dialogue between universities, facilitators of innovation and enter-

prises, and to foster the contribution of the universities to the development of a knowledge-based economy. This can be achieved in establishing university units that sit at interface between academic research and business sector and act to facilitate collaboration and exchange between the two sides. As a response to these challenges and perceived problems in the region, the main focus of the WBCInno project is to develop the University Innovation Platform supported by collaborative software tool for innovation management, with the intention of gathering new ideas from university staff and students, and boosting knowledge transfer and commercialization of R&D results.

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LINK WBCInno project ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/project/13352>



EU membership: Challenges and Opportunities for the Academic Community

Croatia is facing exciting new opportunities following its accession to the European Union on July, 1st. One of these is a stronger integration into the European Research and European Higher Education Areas. The EU accession implies however that the performance of Croatia's science and education sectors will increasingly have to live up to the standards set by the existing member states.

Towards the Goals of the Europe 2020 Strategy

The program of the Government for the years 2011–2015 aims at aligning and harmonising the goals and achievements of the scientific and higher education sectors with those of the Europe 2020 strategy, fostering intelligent, sustainable, and inclusive growth. However, current levels in some of the key Croatian performance indicators are still showing potential for improvement.

Croatia devotes a mere 0.75% of its GDP to R&D activities. The majority of these funds are public expenditures due to the structure of the Croatian economy, where 93% of all companies are micro-companies with an average of 1.9 employees. This represents a very limited innovation and R&D investment potential yet it is encouraging that in the last 5–6 years the funds (in absolute terms) devoted to scientific activities is steady at about 75 million Euros per year.

According to Eurostat data, Croatian applicants currently register less than 6 patents per million inhabitants per year with the European Patent Office, while the average for EU member states is almost 110 patents.

Success rate of Croatian applications to the EU FP7 projects is 17.25%, i.e. below the EU average of 21.77%, yet scientists have succeeded in attracting funding for 38% more money than the Croatian contribution to the FP7 scheme has been so far.

The quality assurance of the Croatian scientific and higher education sectors, coordinated via the activities of the Croatian Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE) has ensured a leading position in the region. The number of Croatian higher education institutions has grown to 10 universities, 15 colleges, and 30 polytechnics in 2012. The number of higher education study programs has grown to 1,200.

The scientific projects financed through the state budget have an application success rate of 85%. There are currently almost 2,000 projects being

financed. The resulting fragmentation of the research potential is not sustainable and is one of the main causes of the rather unsatisfactory output of the scientific sector (see below).

Although the number of scientific publications in relevant databases amounts to roughly 0.8 publications per researcher (FTE) and year, and can be considered pretty satisfactory, the quality of the scientific production is not appropriate. In fact, only 3% of Croatian scientific papers are published in the 10% most cited scientific publications worldwide, while the average in the EU member states for this EU indicator is at 11%. Moreover, less than 400 Croatian scientific publications per million inhabitants are a result of international co-publications, and less than 30 Croatian publications per million inhabitants are a result of public-private co-publications. In turn, the EU average for public-private co-publications is at 53 publications per million inhabitants.

Multilateral Programs Supported by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports (MZOS)

The Ministry provides administrative, professional, and financial support for the participation of Croatia's educational, scientific, research, and sports institutions as well as non-governmental organizations in the global, European, and regional organizations etc. This includes initiatives such as the UNESCO, the Council of Europe, the OSCE, the Central European Initiative, the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative, Stability Pact, the OECD, and NATO. Multilateral activities also take place with CEPUS, CERN, ESF, EMBO, IIR, and ICGEB.

Challenges but also Opportunities on the Horizon

Croatian science and higher education are facing several challenges, but also numerous fascinating opportunities. MZOS see its role in this process as providing a service to students and the academic community. MZOS can only set up the pace of some measures and policies, but their successful implementation in promoting Croatia as a "small country for big brains" can only happen if a large portion of all relevant stakeholders get actively involved in all the phases of this process.

Croatia will take part in the HORIZON 2020. Participation in the COST framework will also continue. Croatia is one of the establishers of the new legal entity for COST within the HORIZON 2020 (COST Association). Croatia aims to increase its participation in the EUREKA projects as well as in some other scientific and higher education programmes and frameworks.

Saša Zelenika, Deputy Minister for Science and Technology at Ministry of Science, Education and Sport

"WBC-INCO.NET is a valuable tool for integration into the ERA. We hope that there will be a way to continue the activities of the Steering Platform since it provides opportunities not only for Croatia but for the entire region. Regional cooperation is important for the simple reason that we have a lot of common priorities, interests, and bilateral/multilateral cooperation. The EU is our destiny, but it is the region that we have to take to the highest possible level."

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Croatia Science Foundation (CSF) ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/organisation/13239>



News from Albania

Interethnic Communication in the Balkans

On the 1st November 2013, the Department of Language at the Faculty of History and Philology of the University of Tirana organized the international conference “The interethnic Communication in the Balkans”. About thirty researchers and academics from the region and beyond submitted their scientific papers. Both the Minister of Education and Sport, Lindita Nikolli, and the Rector of the University of Tirana, Dhori Kule, who is also the Chairman of the Conference of the Rectors, were present. The first conference part dealt with issues such as identity, ethnicity, and communication in the Balkans while the second one focused on the people of the Balkans and their language as a product of their common history. This International Scientific Conference was held as the final step of the project “Interethnic Communication in the Balkans”, supported by the Agency of Research, Technology and Innovation (ARTI).

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ALBANIAN EURAXESS Service Network

The Agency of Research, Technology and Innovation was assigned to the start up of the national EURAXESS Service Network in Albania within the EC FP7 project *AL-ES.Net: Albanian EURAXESS Service Network*.

The objectives of this project are to:

- set up the ALBANIAN EURAXESS Service Network, providing comprehensive up-to-date information and assistance to mobility researchers
- ensure access to a complete range of information and support services for European and non-European researchers
- set up a well-structured Albanian mobility network with a geographical and sector
- develop quality assistance for researchers and their families through comprehensive information and assistance in all matters relating to their professional and daily lives
- provide training facilities to officials and administrators dealing with mobility, particularly within the strongest research institutions.

Through this project, ARTI will promote the EURAXESS Programme in the academic and research area in Albania. It will help not only the incoming researchers in Albania but also the Albanian researchers who want to improve their careers.

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“Have the Courage: Start-up and Innovate”

The growth and diversification of Albania’s economy depends upon the development of a vibrant entrepreneurial culture. Starting a business not only requires a good idea but also a logical and structured plan to attract potential investors to finance a business idea. In such a context, the Albanian Agency for Investment Development (AIDA) launched the initiative “**Have the courage:**

start-up and innovate”, a Business Plan Competition to assist promising entrepreneurs in taking the first steps to start up their own businesses. The initiative is organised in partnership with USAID, UNDP, The Balkan Venture Forum and the TV station DigitAlb. On December 17th, the best plans will be awarded in the following categories: Start-up Best, Innovation in the Start-up, Eco Start-up, Women in the Start-up, and Handicrafts in the Start-up.

Bringing closer businesses and academic research – the first “Observatory” of the Albanian Investments

The Albanian Agency for Investment Development (AIDA) started an initiative called “Investment Observatory”. It is a collaboration platform for universities offering doctoral-level studies and professional master on one hand and the business community, AIDA, and other donors on the other. The main goal of this initiative is to align PhD curricula with the specific challenges and requirements of Albanian businesses, as well as to enable a better distribution of knowledge, studies, and research than our universities possess. After collection of studies, publications, researches etc. they will be included in the database of the Observatory.

AUTHOR *Kujtime Stefani* ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/users/2204>

LINK *AIDA* ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/organisation/8830>

BGS Congress gives a Major Boost to Geosciences in Albania

The 7th Congress of the Balkan Geophysical Society (BGS) was held in Tirana from 7th to 9th October for the first time, and welcomed 270 participants, including 137 from the Balkans. It was organised under the auspices of the Prime Minister of Albania to raise awareness about the importance of geophysics for Albania’s economic and scientific development. One quarter of the papers were produced by Albanian geophysicists and geologists, demonstrating the development of geophysics in the country. The Congress comprised sessions on: seismicity, seismic interpretation; gravity, magnetic and electrical methods; seismology and lithosphere, well as shallow-depth geophysics. The Technical Exhibition enabled companies operating in the exploration of oil, gas, and solid minerals in Albania and the world to expose their innovative geophysical research technologies.

Albanian Journal of Natural and Technical Sciences – Call for Papers

The Albanian Journal of Natural and Technical Sciences (AJNTS) is a publication by the Academy of Sciences of Albania. It is published on a six-month basis papers dealing with all aspects of the natural and technical sciences. A call for contributions is currently open until March 17th, 2014. AJNTS particularly welcomes contributions that illustrate the unifying concepts of science with evidence, either observational or theoretical, from any relevant field are particularly welcomed. For more information, please contact Salvatore Bushati (sbushati@akad.edu.al).

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News from Bosnia and Herzegovina

Promoting Research, Knowledge Transfer and International Collaboration

Research and knowledge transfer in the country were particularly promoted by the Researchers Night in Sarajevo and Banja Luka as well as by the activities implemented by the Intera Technology Park aiming at fostering investment and knowledge transfer through business cooperation with diaspora researchers.

Researcher's Night: 60 Volunteers Helped at the Event

On Friday, 27th September 2013, Sarajevo and Banja Luka celebrated their respective "Researcher's Night". Both cities joined this popular European initiative that has been held in over 300 cities throughout Europe since 2005, with the aim of bringing science closer to the people as well as of encouraging young people to consider science as a career. The "Researchers Night" in BiH was organised by Oxfam, the Institute for Hydrotechnics in Sarajevo, and Tidea doo in Banja Luka.

The event in Sarajevo was hosted by the municipality of Novo Sarajevo and supported by the Federal Ministry of Education and Science, as well as the Ministry for Education, Science and Youth of the Canton Sarajevo. The event was opened by Peter Sorensen, Head of the EU Delegation to BiH & EU Special Representative, accompanied by Silvana Grispino, Country Director, Oxfam in BiH.

Mr Sorensen emphasized the large potential in BiH represented in particular by young students and entrepreneurs, and stressed how the EU encourages continuing building upon the foundation of existent talents. "Science is important, it is all around us. By choosing science you choose to help your country in the best way" said on the other hand Ms Grispino, addressing the young people at the gathering.

More than 30 participants, different institutions, organizations and companies working in science and research, presented their work at the science fairs. Mini-labs, robots, machines and other interactive exhibits attracted much attention from thousands of visitors. Besides that, 14 teams from Sarajevo and 10 teams from Banja Luka took part in the best science project competition. The winning teams were the Electro-Technical School for Energy in Sarajevo for the project "Solar sunflower" and the School of Civil Engineering from Banja Luka with the project "Vibrations tris-tres".

During the "Researcher's Night", citizens of both towns also had the opportunity to exchange views and opinions with scientists and learn from them about a career in science and the level of academic expertise as well as the difficulties for scientists in BiH.

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Conference: CONNECTO 2013

The INTERA Technology Park hosted the conference CONNECTO 2013 - Business cooperation with diaspora on 26 July 2013 in Mostar. The event brought together around 350 participants, representatives of the local business community and representatives of the business-oriented BiH diaspora from 15

countries. The conference was held under the auspices of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers. Vjekoslav Bevanda, who emphasized the importance of following-up contacts initiated to create new business ventures after it. Mrs Ulrike Maria Knotz, German ambassador to BiH, pointed out that 200,000 people live in Germany whose roots are in BiH and who contribute to the German economy.

The guests were also addressed by Bosse Hedberg, the Swedish ambassador, who announced the creation of the so-called Challenge Fund to support business ventures with a particular focus on the use of the knowledge and experience of diaspora actors. Sweden and Bosnia micro and medium-sized businesses will have the opportunity to apply for funding under this Fund.

Mladen Kostic, CEO, INTERA Technology Park, pointed out how the INTERA Technology Park can and should constitute a platform and be a valuable partner for companies to help domestic and diaspora entrepreneurs to expand mutual cooperation, especially keeping in mind the future of the region in terms of employment for young people.

The CONNECTO conference was part of a one-year project that aims to connect entrepreneurs from the region and the diaspora in order to create new business partnerships at the level of investment and to help the export or transfer of knowledge.

LINKS Intera Technology Park ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/organisation/13263>
Challenge Funds ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/link/13261>

A Video for Promoting Science and the EU Framework Programme

Videos for the promotion of science and opportunities of participation in FP7, COST, EUREKA as well as for the announcement of the next FP Programme – Horizon 2020 – were produced and broadcast on some TV stations in Bosnia and Herzegovina: BHT1, RTRS, and FTV, as well as on the internet YouTube channel "NCP System BiH" comprising success stories on the involvement by people and institutions in EU research projects in the framework of FP7, EUREKA, and COST, and including the stories that reflect on establishing the NCP System for EU Framework Programmes in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

This activity was coordinated by the Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina with the support of the Austrian Development Agency.

AUTHOR Alma Hasanović ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/users/1895>

LINK Promotion Videos ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/link/13262>



News from the FYR of Macedonia

Doing innovation in FYR of Macedonia is still not an easy task. SMEs and innovators face lots of obstacles, most prominently a lack of funding. Ideas are numerous yet the lack of resources makes it impossible for many of them to see the light of day.

Technology Transfer:

Recommendations for Successful Public Policies

Written by Bratislav Stankovic and Mirjana Stankovic, *“Technology Transfer in the Republic of Macedonia: Recommendations for Successful Public Policies”* is a first-of-its-kind comprehensive review and analysis of the current state of R&D, technological innovation, intellectual property, technology transfer, and human capital in the FYR of Macedonia. The President of the FYR of Macedonia, Gjorgje Ivanov, was therefore among the attendees at this exceptional book promotion.

The book tackles many pressing problems, such as brain drain, law investments in research and innovation, lack of cooperation within the triple helix, and others. One of the conclusions from the analysis is that only investment in young people and development of their entrepreneurial capabilities and literacy, but first of all in their critical capacities, would be the way to overcome the country's technological under-development.

As science and technology advisor to the president, Mr Stankovic is involved in the formulation of national policies that relate to science, technology, law, and innovation. He is ranked in the top 15% SSRN authors.

Mirjana Stankovic works at the Ministry of Education and Science. In the past, Mirjana Stankovic was a visiting scholar at Duke Public Policy Institute, Center for International Development. For her research, she won a World Bank Robert McNamara fellowship and a Fulbright fellowship. Stankovic holds a Ph.D. in Development Economics from the Institute of Economics, University Ss Cyril and Methodius, Skopje.

Fostering innovation

What is the Country's position in the global world of innovation? The current situation is not very rosy. SMEs and innovators face a number of obstacles, most prominently a lack of funding. Ideas are numerous yet the lack of resources makes it impossible for many of companies to see the light of the day, however there are some positive signals. Besides the policy advancements represented by strategic documents like the Law on Innovative Activity and the National Strategy for Innovation 2012–2020, the Government has started setting money aside to support innovation and development of entrepreneurship, competitiveness, and innovation of SMEs. Although modest, it is an incentive for stimulating the start-up of businesses and craftsmanship. Besides the innovation capacity of companies also the support for developing creativity in students in the educational system is a matter of concern.

The Government is considering an expansion of the 2009 initiative “One computer for each student” by implementing a new “One tablet for each student” initiative, to be completed in 2015.

In the last 2–3 years, intensive trainings for modern methods in teaching and raising students' creativity have been introduced as well at all levels of education. The Macedonian Innovative Educators Forum has been established honoring and awarding teachers who have exhibited innovative use of technology in classroom on a competitive basis.

Most of the local companies still have a national focus. They hardly enter international markets. They introduce innovation, but it is mostly for domestic markets. Partnerships between researchers and companies do exist, but on a very small scale. Needs and interests on both sides are much bigger.

From Innovation to their Own Business:

ACDC – DCAC, a Leading Innovative Company in the Field of Multy-Stage Surge Protection



Shield for electrical appliances

Co-founded by Vangjel Dimanovski and Ivan Popovic, ACDC – DCAC won the first prize at the 2001 innovation fair with its first patent, a device for three-level protection of electrical appliances, Later on they received the national award “2007 Patent of the Year” and the latest victory came in 2010, once again for the device to protect equipment from power surges, but now upgraded to Eight (8) Stage Surge Protector, and modified in terms of the 2001 patent. “So far we are the only producer in the Balkans, and unique in the EU.

The product itself has five built-in patents that we have been promoting since 2001. The innovation is in the quality of protection devices, but also in terms of their simplicity of use. The devices ensure protection from lightning, bad power supply, peaks in the power grid, or sudden shutdowns and start ups of electricity for electrical and electronic appliances. In this we have a product that is currently better than any other, more complex, sophisticated, we apply some protection technologies that others do not apply,” said Popovic. ACDC's patent is already put to use by domestic telecoms, hospitals, banks, and hundreds of schools in Macedonia. So far, the product has been developed exclusively with the company's money, but to build a factory that will allow Popovic to conquer the international market; they will need much more funds. The biggest obstacle, naturally, is money. “With its technical attributes and quality, the product deserves to be side by side with U.S. and European brands in this field, and it is currently the biggest innovative export potential of high technology that FYR of Macedonia can offer”.

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LINK ACDC – DCAC ■ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/organisation/13267>



News from Montenegro

Open Science Days

Organized by the Ministry of Science each year since 2011, Open Science Days 2013 is the biggest science festival in Montenegro and took place in Podgorica on 23–27 September in four locations. The main goal was to show young people that knowledge is their most profitable investment. This goal was achieved through a number of events like the Knowledge Factory, Researchers' Night, but also through numerous exhibitions, such as the Mobile Planetarium, the Math Exhibition, as well as various other lectures, workshops, and performances, during which 80 speakers and 200 demonstrators and exhibitors presented their ideas. It is estimated that 12,000 people visited the festival.

Involvement of the business sector proved to be highly important in organizing the Knowledge Factory, the biggest educational and business IT event in the region. Organized in cooperation with the company ComTrade, the Knowledge Factory brought together pupils from elementary and high schools, students, entrepreneurs, and businesses.

With the aim of informing the research community about developments in the main European programmes for research and SMEs: the Ministry of Science invited Ms Katalin Alföldi, Policy Officer for Inclusiveness and Excellence in the COST Office, as well as national contact points in charge of the promotion of the COSME programme and MC Actions.

Fostering Innovation-Based research for e-Montenegro (Fore-Mont)

The kick-off meeting for the Fore-Mont project took place in Podgorica from 26th to 28th August 2013. It is funded under the FP7-REGPOT-2012–2013 call for a total amount of € 1,463,611 for the period 2013–2016. Fore-Mont aims at strengthening the University of Montenegro – Faculty of Electrical Engineering's (UoM-FEE) excellence by improving its research infrastructure, human resources and fostering long-term partnerships. The project will create strong synergies in research from the three current FEE research groups working in the field of ICT: the Laboratory for Multimedia Systems, the Laboratory for Digital Signal Processing, and the Centre for Telecommunications. These groups will merge to provide a research centre dedicated to innovative research in info-communication infrastructures and e-services engineering: the Research Centre for Info-Communication Technologies.

The Faculty of Electrical Engineering will collaborate in this project with the Centre for TeleInfrastruktur – University of Aalborg; Institut Jožef Stefan – Department of Communication Systems; iMINDS – Interdisciplinary Institute for Broadband Technology; Ericsson Nikola Tesla, and CEA -Laboratory for Electronics and Information Technology. The project foresees intense mobility trainings, international and regional conferences, workshops, and participation in scientific and industrial events to promote the project steps and results.

LINK *Fore-Mont Project* ■ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/project/13264>

Cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

The 57th Regular Session of the General Conference of the IAEA was held in Vienna, 16–20 September 2013. A delegation from Montenegro, headed by

Sanja Vlahović, Minister of Science, participated in the event. During the Conference, the delegation from Montenegro met the Deputy Director General (DDG) for Nuclear Science and Applications, Daud Mohamad, and the DDG for Technical Cooperation, Kwaku Aning, to discuss current cooperation and possibilities for strengthening it in near future.



Minister Vlahović and the Montenegrin Delegation

Bearing in mind that the field of medicine is considered to be one of the priorities for the cooperation with the IAEA, the Montenegrin delegation discussed these issues in the meeting organized by the IAEA Program for Action of Cancer Therapy and Technical Cooperation Department.

Flash News from the Ministry of Science

In the framework of the HERIC project (Higher Education and Research for Innovation and Competitiveness Project) the Call for the award of grant for Centre of Excellence (CoE) was closed on 20 September and the evaluation of applications is in progress. The Status of the Pilot CoE will be awarded for a 3-year period, from March 2014 on. The Ministry of Science announced also a Call for Proposals for research and development subprojects (R&DS), which will enhance the quality and relevance of scientific research, strengthen the cooperation with the private sector and international research institutions.

The establishment of a Science and Technology Park (STP) in Montenegro represents one of the most important projects by the Ministry and is the key project for connecting the science and business sectors. The first step towards the establishment of the STP is the creation of the Innovative Entrepreneurial Center "TEHNOPOLIS" in Nikšić. Tendering procedures are in progress.

AUTHOR *Milena Milonjić* ■ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/users/463>

LINK *HERIC project* ■ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/project/13089>

Darko Petrusic, Deputy Minister of Science of Montenegro:

"WBC-INCO.NET and the Steering Platform on Research for WBCs provided us with valuable input for the development of research policies. They enabled us to strengthen regional cooperation and further integrate Montenegro into ERA. Our Country is committed to take full advantage of the EU research programmes being aware of their importance for building up a knowledge-based economy and society. Through WBC-INCO.NET, we had the opportunity to exchange ideas, experience, and expert knowledge, which resulted in new initiatives and partnerships."



News from Serbia

Serbian Parliament Approves Governmental Changes

On Monday, September 2, 2013, the Serbian parliament in Belgrade voted to approve a government reshuffle. After the changes, the government will have 18 ministries instead of the current 17, as the Ministry of Finance and Economy will be split into two. The new Minister for Education, Science and Technological Development is Tomislav Jovanović.



Born in Trbunje in 1951. He obtained a PhD at the School of Medicine in Belgrade, where he now heads the Department of Medical Physiology. Since 1994, he has been full professor at the School of Medicine, the youngest full professor in the territory of the former state.

Tomislav Jovanović

Center for the Promotion of Science hosted the First SEE Regional Science Promotion Conference (SCIPROM)

The Center for the Promotion of Science (CPN) organized the First SEE Regional Science Promotion Conference (SCIPROM) under UNESCO patronage, in Belgrade, on October 2nd & 3rd, 2013. The event brought together science promotion professionals, practitioners, and enthusiasts to share experience and to network in order to strengthen the links between science and society in the region. Nowadays, it is imperative to enhance economic and social capacities by improving the education structure of the society, inspiring innovation and technological advancement and creating a milieu conducive to the appreciation of the value and the benefits of knowledge.

Keynote sessions featured around 90 key speakers: international experts and representatives of international organizations, research and education institutions, science camps, science communicators, NGOs, private sector, and the media. More than 300 participants registered for the SCIPROM Conference.

Among the keynote speakers who gave the welcome notes in the opening session of the Conference were Minister of Education, Science and Technological Development, Government of the Republic of Serbia, Tomislav Jovanović, and the Director of the Center for the Promotion of Science, Aleksandra Drečun.

Ceremonial Opening of the Central University Building

The beginning of the new academic year at the University of Novi Sad was marked by the ceremonial opening of the Central University Building on the University Campus, on 30th September 2013. The building is the result of the fruitful cooperation between the republic and provincial governments and was constructed with the support of the financial resources provided through the European Investment Bank for realization of the Project "Public Sector Research and Development" and by the Fund for Capital Investments of AP Vojvodina. In addition, the EU HETIP project provided support for the technical, IT, and multimedia equipment.

The event took place in the main hall of the newly built Central University Building in the presence of the Minister of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia, Tomislav Jovanović, the President of the Government of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, Bojan Pajić, the



Central University Building

Provincial Secretary of Science and Technological Development, Dragoslav Petrović, the rector of the University of Novi Sad, Miroslav Vesković, and many guests from the academic community and partner institutions of the University.

Final Conference of the ARTreat project

One of the biggest scientific projects in Europe, ARTreat has successfully finished with a final conference held at the University of Kragujevac in November 2013. ARTreat project provides a new concept in the diagnosis of cardiovascular diseases, where the goal is to use patient-specific models to predict the development of the disease. Atherosclerosis is the most frequent disease in the Western world and in our country. The main objective of the project was to develop software that will be applied in the clinics for direct prediction of the formation and development of stenosis, with particular emphasis on clinical studies of stenosis in coronary and carotid arteries. The project has involved 20 partners in almost all European countries. This is one of the largest projects in this area, with a total project cost around 10 million euros. The project coordinator was the Italian CNR. More than 30 researchers were involved in Serbia, while the entire project involved more than 300 researchers across Europe.

Nano Centre Belgrade

With an investment of 40 million Euro and a construction period between January 2014 and the end of 2015, the Centre for Materials and Nanoscience in Belgrade is designed as a laboratory space where capital research projects will be conducted in the interdisciplinary research fields of Micro-fabrication and Nanosciences, New Materials, and Supercomputing "Blue Danube". The laboratory will have a modern infrastructure in line with the standards of the European Research Area (ERA) with the strategic aim to contribute to the European Strategic Forum on Research Infrastructure (ESFRI). The construction period is January 2014 to the end of 2015.

AUTHOR Željka Dukić ■ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/users/2704>

LINKS Ministry of Education, Science and Technological development ■ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/organisation/8420>
 SCIPROM Conference ■ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/event/13254>
 Centre for the Promotion of Science ■ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/organisation/13255>
 University of Novi Sad ■ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/organisation/8725>
 ARTreat project ■ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/project/13257>

Conclusion of SEE-ERA.NET PLUS



By July 2013, the FP7 SEE-ERA.NET PLUS was concluded and the 23 funded joint European research projects (JERPs) have completed their activities. The key multilateral funding activity has involved 17 partners, 14 of which have provided three million Euros for multilateral research projects, including a top-up provided by the EC. In general, contracted funding utilization was 95.7%.

From the first months of 2013, the joint call secretariat and the SEE-ERA.NET PLUS coordinators have approached the JERP directors to collect outputs and results of their respective activities in a structured manner. Complementing the financial declarations received from each of the 97 funded partners and the 23 Final Reports describing the progress of different projects, this piece of information provides further insight as to the functioning of the joint activities.

Questions addressed during the collection of data from JERP coordinators have concerned the

- (1) contribution of individual partners to the project outputs;
- (2) an indication if the outputs would have been produced in case the JERP funding did not arrive (output additionality of measure) and
- (3) information about the contribution of the JERP to the relevant product of work (share of work).

Moreover, the monitoring of projects has employed several instruments since 2011. A number of 3 different online questionnaires addressed both to the funded project partners and coordinators has made possible a timely observation of the ongoing processes. In addition, a monitoring meeting was organised in April 2012 to

- (1) see the progress of the funded projects;
- (2) identify problems along funding and reporting processes;
- (3) facilitate thematic exchange among the projects.

One of the results of the monitoring meeting was the expressed need for more information about capitalization of products of the joint research work.

During May 2013, a dedicated meeting for JERP coordinators and partners was organized in Novi Sad and funded by WBC-INCO.NET. Information and documentation both of the progress and the final results aim at providing evidence in view of any future impact evaluation of the joint funding activity.

In the next years, before starting with a dedicated evaluation addressing the impact of the funding there is the need that

- (1) the future use of the results of such assessment is ensured;
- (2) the interest of the funding partners is declared to support the evaluation e.g. from the remaining funding available on the joint trust account at DLR in Germany.

In view of an independent assessment, the evaluations can be conducted by an impartial evaluator, and a particular Terms of References would be used to describe the specific evaluation objectives. Moreover, the results can justify the spending of public funds by the contributing national authorities and ministries from the region, from the EU MS involved, and for the EC, which has been contributing a substantial share of funding as a top-up of the call.

AUTHOR *Martin Felix Gajdusek* ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/users/2248>

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

CEI Ministerial Meeting on Science and Technology: Activities related to Advanced Biofuels towards a Bio-based Economy

Ministers for Science and Technology, State Secretaries, Deputy Ministers, and high officials from the 18 Member States of the Central European Initiative, as well as representatives of the European Commission, gathered in Trieste (Italy) on 29 October 2013 at the Ministerial Meeting on Science and Technology.

On top of the Agenda were the activities in the field of advanced biofuels and the related development of a Bio-based Economy. In this context, the Ministers expressed full appreciation for the approval of the three projects concerning the promotion of technological development related to Advanced Biofuels, the optimisation of supply and logistics of bio-mass resources, and a policy dialogue on research/innovation in the Danube Region.

Special focus was put on the progress achieved with regard to the establishment of the C-ERIC Consortium aimed at facilitating access of Scientific Communities of CEI Member States to the Synchrotron Radiation Laboratories (Elettra) and to the Free Electron Laser Laboratories (Fermi) located in Trieste. Ministers expressed appreciation for the two calls already launched, which will enable ten fellows from CEI Member Countries to be immediately involved in C-ERIC-related scientific activities.

The CEI Secretariat's efforts in promoting scientific research and innovation especially in the Balkans, the Danube Region, and the Eastern Neighbourhood were also highlighted.

All presentations by Ulla Engelmann, Head of Unit of the Interinstitutional and Stakeholder Relations Office at the European Commission's Joint Research Center, and Giorgio Rosso Cicogna, Special Advisor to CEI Secretary General on Advanced Biofuels and a Bio-based Economy, are available on the WBC-INCO.NET website as indicated below.

AUTHOR *Giorgio Rosso Cicogna* ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/users/2170>

LINKS *Event review and presentation* ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/news/13240>
Central European Initiative ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/organisation/8475>

EU Support of the Research Capacity Development in Kosovo*

The EU Office in Kosovo is supporting four research projects focusing on priority areas from the National Research program. In this way the EU is contributing to upgrading the research capacities in the Country, and also to establishing strong mutual partnerships with EU research institutions.

Two years ago, the *European Union Office in Kosovo* launched an open call for proposals to contribute to the upgrading of research capacity of the local research universities, as well as public and private research institutes. The idea was to support 4–6 project proposals in line with the priority research fields defined in the Country's 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.

Following the assessment process, four out of over 25 proposals submitted were selected for funding.

Building Capacity for Social Science Research

The project “*Enhancing Social Scientific Research in Kosovo and its integration into the European Research Area (ESSie)*” is implemented by the Kosova Education Center (KEC), in partnership with the Institute for Social Studies and Humanities of the University of Prishtina, and four Austrian partners: the Center for Social Innovation (ZSI), the University of Vienna, SORA, and FORBA. The Project idea is to upgrade the capacity for social science research by exposing a group of young researchers to an internationally recognized training program and providing opportunities for internships in Austrian partner institutions.

The first step was to develop a training program for international Social Scientific Research qualifications. In parallel, a social science lab equipped with 15 computers as well as statistical and text analytical software tools was established at the University of Prishtina. A group of 37 young social science researchers was selected based on an open call for participation in a 15-day program organized in three modules. The group consists of researchers from academia, research institutes, but also of individuals from government and private sector. According to the plan, the provision was delivered during 2013 in three 4–5-day modules: in January, July, and November.

The Project is currently in the process of selecting 10 trainees who will participate in a mentoring scheme offered by Austrian partners. The mentees will



Training of Young Researchers

have an opportunity to spend up to 2 weeks in one of the Austrian partner institutions and work on their research projects, expected to result in scientific articles on the topics studied. On 26 November 2013, the project organized the Horizon 2020 launch conference in cooperation with the European Commission and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

Environmental Protection

The project “*Environmental Pollution in Kosovo: potential genotoxic effects and related human health risks*” is being implemented by the University of Prishtina in partnership with the University of Salzburg. The project idea is to improve human and environmental health in the country to meet EU standards, particularly in relation to public health, by establishing the necessary research infrastructure and promoting research-guided teaching at the Master and Diploma level. Another action supported by the EU program in the field of Environment is “*InWaterSense: Intelligent Wireless Sensory Networks for Monitoring Surface Water Quality*”, a project implemented by the University of Prishtina in partnership with the Meteorological Institute and three partner universities from Austria, Germany, and Sweden. The idea is to install a Wireless Sensory Network in one of the most polluted rivers in the country in order to monitor water quality and then transform it into an intelligent platform. In one year, the project managed to produce two publications.

Public Health

The project “*Capacity building to implement state of the art surveillance systems for anti-biotic consumption and resistance in Kosovo*” is implemented by the National Institute of Public Health (NIPH) in partnership with the University of Antwerp (Belgium). The project idea is to increase research capacity in the public health sector in order to determine the prevalence of antibiotic-resistant bacteria and to improve the local quantity of antibiotic prescribing.

The project together with stakeholder has supported the drafting of national surveillance plan of the Strategy and Action Plan to Combat Antimicrobial Resistance in Kosovo*. The project also anticipates supply of equipment to NIPH laboratories and internship opportunities for two PhD students from the University of Prishtina.

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LINKS Kosova Education Centre ■ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/organisation/8991>
ESSie Project ■ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/project/12727>
Environmental Pollution in Kosovo Project ■ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/project/13250>
Capacity Building Project ■ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/project/13251>

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence)

Making Innovation happen

Catching-up is to a very large extent based on innovations which are not the result of scientific breakthroughs. Moreover, not only firms in high-tech industries contribute to growth and innovation performance of the countries in the Western Balkans. Such lessons can be drawn from studying statistical data, but it is more inspiring to show it by real-life examples and by having the stories told by the actual persons who make innovation happen.

Rade Koncar – TEP is a leading company in the metal and electrical industry of the FYR of Macedonia and the Balkans. The SME has about 55 employees and was established in 2006 but is part of the well known brand “Rade Koncar” which has a history which goes back 65 years. This young manufacturing company is successful and innovative in many ways. It has been profitable for many years, it has a high labour productivity, it is growing, with good growth potential, aiming to double turnover and employment within the next five years. The company has improved itself, without mayor external funding, by product innovation, process innovation, organisational innovations, and market innovation. Their constant process of improvements can be evidenced by: many ISO Certifications, presence at many international trade fairs, a European patent, training for employees in Japan, and the recent award for social responsibility. We spoke with Goran Antevski (General Manager) and Ana Kanceska (Head of Sales Department).

With a turnover of 3 million Euro Rade Koncar – TEP is in the top 10 companies in terms of profit. With the new machines it takes 1 hour to make a product, which in the past used to take 8 hours. About 60% of production is for local markets and 40% is exported. The company can feel the crisis in Europe, but mainly by the fact that many clients delay payment for up to 6 months. Over the last seven years 4 million euro have been invested.



Goran Antevski interviewed by René Wintjes

One of the indicators for this company innovativeness is a patented clickable cable tray system. This click system is 40% faster to install than the old system, in which the metal trays had to be connected by screws. The company does not have a formal R&D department to do research on new products, but it provides a bonus to workers who come up with improvements and promotes the exchange of ideas between workers.

The aim to double turnover will also be reached by cooperation with other companies. Current contacts are with Sweden, Poland, and Turkey. New activities could involve producing for other European companies, produce in Joint Ventures, and also sell for other companies. Turkish engineers will come

to Skopje to set up production in a product that is of high quality but half the price of current EU products. The factory in Egypt has problems so the factory will be transferred to Skopje. A major advantage is the price: “our prices are Chinese prices.”

Skilled labour is very important to TEP. Employees have been sent to Japan for training in new production processes, and are also paid for attending international trade fairs. Concerning the lack of skilled people, the firm regrets that it has limited possibilities to cooperate with universities. Another new idea is to look for clients in other sectors and show them how to increase their energy efficiency and to support them in reducing their electricity bill.

Vitalia Nikola Ltd is a 20-year-old family firm with 130 employees which develops and produces a range of healthy food products in Skopje, of which 65% is exported to 40 countries worldwide. Vitalia is a manufacturer of over 200 healthy products that are on the shelf at famous retail chains like Carrefour, Metro, Billa, Spar, Mercator, and Konzum. This success story was explained in spring 2013 in an interview with Nikola Vetadzokoski (president) and Jovica Mladenovski (area export manager).

Almost two decades ago, Vitalia started as a small shop in Skopje selling health food products which were imported from Germany. It was a challenge as the market had no perception of healthy nutrition, and the response from the consumers was still unpredictable. Three years after opening this first shop Vitalia started its own production. In the beginning, the recipes were copied, but later they developed their own recipes. A strategy that has remained from the start is to use the best ingredients and to follow very closely what the new trends and new customer needs are. A competitive advantage of manufacturing in the FYR of Macedonia is represented by the low production costs.

The company can't grow without innovation but it is not engaged in basic research. The research they do concerns market-research. The R&D mostly relates to development as they develop new recipes and design packaging. Chia seeds (*salvia hispanica*) are an example of a relative new popular ingredient which is used in several products. They are very expensive, but also the richest plant source of Omega-3 fatty acids (over 30%), Omega-6 fatty acids (10%), proteins and powerful antioxidants.

Anticipating further growth of production and export, the company has invested in a 40,000 square meter green-field site and it is currently working on the design of the new production facility.

Although food production is often classified as a traditional or low-tech sector, Vitalia is in all respects a very innovative and modern company. New products are essential for the demanding trendy customers, but these new products can be developed without engaging in scientific research.

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Business Membership Organizations – an instrument to increase SMEs' EU funds absorption

The support to the establishment of Business Membership Organizations has proven to be an effective tool to increase SMEs' absorptive capacity of EU funds especially as intermediary institutions are commonly missing or are insufficiently designed in transition economies.

The recent examples from Bulgaria and Romania demonstrate that the superior competitive position, based on productivity and innovation, of the local economy is a baseline requirement for a smooth and efficient EU integration for the candidate countries. The economy of the current candidate countries in the Western Balkans and Southeast Europe relies heavily on SMEs, as larger companies are rare.

The EU supports especially the innovation process through several funding schemes. However, the transition process in Southeast Europe entails an unstable institutional environment. In this environment, specialized intermediaries that support the access to EU funds for SMEs are missing. SMEs are often not aware of these support programs, and the administrative burdens and challenges in the application process are rather high or are regarded as such. The question is thus how access to these EU funds for SMEs can be facilitated.

In Serbia, the GIZ (German Agency for International Cooperation), implementing a project on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development in order to support SMEs in the ICT sector to take advantage of the available EU programs, has supported a local ICT business network to build up an internal service and competence unit with the capacity to successfully apply for respective EU programs.

This Business Membership Organization (BMO) – that wants to remain anonymous – aimed at enhancing the service portfolio of the network and supporting its members to gain access to EU funds. As experts for EU programs are in high demand in Serbia and are therefore expensive, the GIZ project focused on developing local staff of the BMO to become experts on, and trainers for, EU programs. Here the challenge was to generate an environment and incentive structure capable of supporting this staff.

The prospect of being trained and qualified in a highly requested field of knowledge and working in an international environment allowed the BMO to create positions with a long-term perspective for both sides. These perspectives were translated into the commitment of staying at the BMO for a minimum time and highlighted in the contractual obligations.

After the capacity development phase of the BMO staff, the BMO applied for EU funds in its own name to develop its services further. It could acquire a sufficient amount of EU funds to develop, with consultancy support by GIZ, a list of services with a pricing catalogue within the first two years of its operation. These services are considered quite valuable to the members of the network. The members pay a membership fee of €100 a month. Companies state this "is a substantial amount", yet, at the same time, they add that membership in the business network "is a certain added value". The services focus on the information provision of access and functioning of EU calls, project development and proposal writing, as well as consultancy on project management.

With these services, the BMO acts as a combination of several missing intermediaries in the Serbian business environment.

- First, it acts as an intermediary, providing access to formal and informal information on EU calls and procedures. Information that is otherwise commonly difficult to obtain, as one company explained: "So if you are out of the BMO, you are not so well informed". Yet another company stated when asked about the services provided by the BMO: "There is one, maybe not formally defined service, that of providing information and contacts. I can ask the BMO manager to provide me with some information from our governmental institutions, or sometimes he is the link to other IT companies."
- Second, the BMO acts as an intermediary providing access to specialized human capital. It does so in two ways. One, as the previous statement already touches on, by providing contacts to specialist, and second, by providing specialized knowledge concerning EU project application and management through their own staff. The BMO's knowledge in EU funds application in management has already resulted in several EU funds for some SMEs in the network within the first 2 years of existence worth over €200,000. Hence, this establishes a third intermediary function that the BMO obtains, that of an intermediary providing access to capital. This is extremely relevant for SMEs in transition economies as bank lending strategy is usually rather conservative and as venture capital is hardly developed. One interviewed company stressed this void in the institutional environment by stating that, "Well, venture capital is something that we just read about in paper (laughs)".

After less than two years, the BMO became self-sustainable. GIZ's input was – if financial and consultancy inputs are considered – less than €25,000 over the whole period of two years. The acquired EU funds by the network are ten times as much as the initial investment, the rate of EU applications and their success is on the rise from SMEs within this business network.

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WBC-INCO.NET Final Conference and Call for Papers

27–28 March 2014, Vienna

While the core focus of the conference will be primarily on HORIZON 2020 and thus the future collaboration in RTDI between WBC and EU member states, the conference will be used also to present the results from WBC-INCO.NET (final publication to be presented) as well as to exchange the information on other on-going/up-coming activities in WBC in particular focusing innovation issues.

Additionally, a back-to-back BROKERAGE EVENT will be held in light of the Horizon 2020 with the overall goal to provide an environment to build new partnerships for cooperation in HORIZON 2020.

LINKS WBC-INCO.NET Final Conference ▫ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/news/12737>
Call for papers ▫ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/news/13292>
Final publication ▫ <http://wbc-inco.net/object/news/13293>

Register your Research Infrastructure in the WBC-INCO.NET website

We invite all research institutes, universities, faculties, technological centers, private companies and other relevant institutions with research infrastructure, facilities or important research equipment installed at their facilities (e.g. singular research installations, collections, libraries, databases, biological archives, high-capacity/high speed communications networks, research vessels, telescopes, seismology observation facilities, chemical testing facilities and equipment, networks of computing facilities, etc.) to register with WBC-INCO.NET website.

LINK <http://wbc-inco.net/object/news/12916>

Researchers' Report 2013



It is the second of three annual reports focusing on the profession of “researcher” in Europe. The report looks in particular at issues around research training and employment conditions, gender and dual career considerations, and ensuring that leading academics, researchers and innovators reside and work in Europe and that a sufficient number of highly skilled third country nationals are attracted to Europe. The report also considers the measures that the countries are taking to address these issues, and any impact that they have already identified. The report is complemented by data Annexes, by 38 detailed country profiles, by around 50 examples of good practice and by “scorecards” which provide a quick visual presentation of where countries stand in relation to the main issues.

LINK <http://wbc-inco.net/object/document/13202>

Doing Business in 2013



This report compares business regulations for domestic firms in 185 economies. Regulations affecting 11 areas of the life of a business are covered: starting a business, dealing with construction permits, getting electricity, registering property, getting credit, protecting investors, paying taxes, trading across borders, enforcing contracts, resolving insolvency and employing workers. The employing workers data are not included in this year's ranking on the ease of doing business. Data in Doing Business 2013 are current as of June 1, 2012. The indicators are used to analyse economic outcomes and identify what reforms of business regulation have worked, where and why.

LINK <http://wbc-inco.net/object/document/13207>

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