

DRAFT

Conclusions of meeting of Steering Platform on Research for Western Balkan Countries

Ohrid, 26 May 2011

The Steering Platform on Research for the Western Balkan Countries met in Ohrid on 26 May 2011. The meeting was co-chaired by the Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on behalf of the Western Balkan Countries – who hosted the event – and the European Commission.

The Steering Platform heard the introductory statements from FYR of Macedonia, the Hungarian Presidency and the European Commission, from which it became clear that innovation is very high on the political agenda both at EU and regional level as well as the preparation for the future Common Strategic Framework.

From the presentations of the Progress Reports the Platform took note that all Members are actively implementing ongoing research funding activities. In this context the work of SEE-ERA.NET PLUS was very much welcomed. The Platform was also very encouraged by the different actions and measures taken by the Balkan countries to strengthen the research and innovation capacity. Cooperation with both COST and Eureka has successfully continued.

Several members also referred to future cooperation such as strengthening cooperation with the JRC for enlargement countries and implementation of the Danube Strategy. The UNESCO and CEI mentioned also several possibilities for future cooperation.

The Platform welcomed the presentation of the Strategy for the Danube Region by the Priority Area 7 Co-Coordinator from Serbia and Slovakia. All expressed interest in pooling research efforts to meet the objectives of the Strategy and asked which actions (e.g. ERA-NET or ERA-NET PLUS) the Commission could consider under FP7 or later to support the objectives of the Danube Strategy.

The Platform welcomed the continuous support of the WBC-INCO.NET which is an essential tool for the integration of the region in the European Research Area and the contribution to the Innovation Union. The Platform encouraged to continue the cooperation amongst all enlargement countries.

On the future Common Strategic Framework (CSF), the Platform took note of the Consultation Process on the Green Paper and the follow-up. The interest was expressed to be present at the Stakeholder Conference to be held on 10 June in Brussels. The Platform welcomed the contribution, on behalf of all enlargement countries, presented by TÜBİTAK. Several members offered to pursue the discussion, in particular on the type of capacity building required and on the balance between small and larger research projects.

With respect to synergy between R&I funding and the Pre-Accession Instrument (IPA), the beneficiary countries were encouraged to deploy more IPA under all components for research capacity building. The Platform asked that the post-2013 IPA would support more clearly the EU 2020 priorities and in particular support for building the Innovation Union and competitiveness in general.

All members were encouraged to exchange ideas and best practices on IPA support granted so far.

The Platform took note of the progress presented by the OECD on the regional competitiveness initiative (RCI) which supports national pilot projects on development of innovation and human capital.

The Platform welcomed the presentation from RCC and the Worldbank outlining the preliminary ideas on how to implement the project “Regional Strategy on Research and Development for Innovation for Western Balkans” on the basis of the Joint Statement of the Ministerial Conference held in April 2009 in Sarajevo. The need to mobilize knowledge and create more leverage was underlined and the importance to build upon work already undertaken, in particular by the WBC-INCO.NET project and input from beneficiary countries.

The Platform welcomed the presentation made on survey on the research and innovation agenda in the region presented by the Institute of Economics in Zagreb. In this context, the importance of collecting data and establishing statistics and indicators was underlined. The Platform also welcomed the opportunity and ideas presented to enhance innovation and took note of the progress made on innovation by the WBC-INCO.NET work package on innovation. Mapping of innovation infrastructures was considered a useful exercise to build upon innovation capacity.

Information on the next meeting will be announced in due time. An expression of interest to host it in Sarajevo was made by Bosnia and Herzegovina.