



Editorial

Dear readers,
this journal marks the transition of our work from our project see-science.eu, which ends April 30, 2008, to the WBC-INCO.NET. Many activities are therefore running in parallel and our journal is also a bit delayed: a new layout, a new logo and further increased volume of the journal are just the most superficial changes. The new project now includes 26 partners and will continue to inform you via the regular journal – but mainly through the web-newsletter, which will be initiated.

We do not only inform you about the project, but also about EC activities – progress in the association to the Framework Programme on page 2, EU communications on the Balkans on page 3 and 4. We provide an overview on the eligibility of the WBC to community programmes and recommend our updated “Needs-Offers-Matrix”. Updates on the focus of research infrastructure are summarised on page 6 and further interesting programmes and initiatives introduced on page 7 and 8. Our regional focus, starting on page 9, is placed on the one hand on Albania, as we introduce their bilateral programmes and on the other hand on Croatia, with a focus on innovation. In this issue, we invited the Stability Pact / Regional Co-operation Council to inform about the transition and effects on the education and research fields on page 12. Some articles give an insight into the project activities: our focus on global issues in RTD programmes and priorities on page 14, the INCO-NET training workshops in Belgrade and Sarajevo on page 15. On the same page, information on access to scientific literature is provided by eIFL.net, an important global network in this field.

As usual SEE-ERA.NET hosts a specific page in our journal – page 16 informs about the recent project developments. Several event announcements and reviews round up the journal (pages 17-19) and we also recommend some further reading on page 20. We hope you enjoy the new journal and we would like to encourage you to register for our regular e-mail-updates on <http://www.wbc-inco.net/ejournal/list>

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Imprint

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Kick-Off Meeting

On February 1, 2008, for the first time all 26 partners of the project WBC-INCO.NET came together at the Kick-Off Meeting in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

The Western Balkan Countries' INCO-NET (WBC-INCO.NET) is one of six new projects on international co-operation funded by the European Union in its 7th Framework Programme on Research and Technological Development to support bi-regional dialogues in the area of science and technology (S&T). A consortium of 26 partners, which includes relevant ministries from the WBCs, will work intensely on the integration of the region into European research networks during the next four years. The purpose of the kick-off meeting was to discuss the plans on the implementation of the work packages as defined in the “Description of work”, and to clarify administrative and financial issues related to the project start and implementation. The general layout of the project was presented by the co-ordinator, Elke Dall, from the Centre for Social Innovation. Altogether, the agenda of the meeting was dominated by presentations on the five key work packages by the respective work package leaders: Heribert Buchbauer from the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research (BWF), Karin Wedde-Mühlhausen and Ulrike Kunze from the International Bureau of the BMBF at the German Aerospace Center (IB-DLR), Davor Kozmus from the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology of Slovenia (MHEST), Nikos Sidiropoulos from the General Secretariat for Research and Technology (GSRT) and Viktor Nedović from the Ministry of Science of Serbia (MSCI). Further contributions were made by Tania Friederichs and Michele Genovese – both from the European Commission (EC) – on the political background and interfaces with the EC. All in all, the Kick-off meeting in Ljubljana can be seen as a success, providing the perspective of good collaboration and work results in the future of the WBC-INCO.NET project. The achievements of this project will be measured e.g. through increased involvement of scientists from the region in the European Framework Programme and other programmes of co-operative research. Information on the training workshops, which will be held in May, and other project activities are available on the WBC-INCO.NET website and in this journal.



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LINK Project website ▪ <http://www.wbc-inco.net>

Redesign Of Our Journal

The previous journal from the see-science.eu project is replaced by the publication of the WBC-INCO.NET project, which brings along some changes.

Due to the transition of this journal from the see-science.eu project, which is funded under FP6 and ends in April 2008, to the WBC-INCO.NET project, funded under FP7 from January 2008 till December 2011, several changes are currently being implemented, which are visible already.

Changes made

The layout has been professionalised by subcontracting a company focused on graphic design. Furthermore, the content has been enriched by the partners of the INCO-NET consortium and therefore, the volume increased. Also, the journal will now be published every 4 months.

We thus hope that this and the next issues will also astonish and inform you in the same way as our previous issues did (see Michele Genovese from DG Research with our fall/winter issue).



Michele Genovese (EC) enjoying our journal

To complement the printed issue of the journal, WBC-INCO.NET will now provide you with regular mailings with news from the website, as the information published in the journal is only a fraction of the available news, which are updated on almost daily basis on <http://www.wbc-inco.net>.

Montenegro Signs MoU to join FP7

On January 25, 2008, Montenegro signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the European Commission, which will allow full access to the EU's 7th Framework Programme (FP7), which runs from 2007 to 2013.

This "associated status" will allow Montenegro to participate in all calls for proposals and to compete on an equal footing with the EU Member States for research co-operation projects and support actions funded by FP7, as of January 1, 2008. With Montenegro, all countries of the Western Balkans except Bosnia and Herzegovina are now associated to this EU funding programme.

This agreement can therefore be seen as an important step in the process of applying to join the EU. It will allow Montenegrin scientists, universities and companies to create links with their counterparts across Europe and build up their scientific expertise, including the expertise in scientific fields crucial to implementing the body of EU legislation.



Janez Potočnik and Slavica Milčić at the signing ceremony in Brussels
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An important decision for the future of Montenegro

"Today's decision is a very positive and important one, not only for the scientific future of Montenegro, but also for its political future. Full participation in the research framework programme brings Montenegro into the European Research Area and I believe this is important in helping Montenegro prepare itself for membership of the EU," said Science and Research Commissioner Janez Potočnik at the signature ceremony. "In addition to forging links with scientists and companies across Europe, Montenegro will have new opportunities to work with its regional partners in addressing common challenges."

Commissioner Potočnik signed the Memorandum on behalf of the European Commission at a ceremony held in Brussels, with the Montenegrin Ambassador to the EU, Slavica Milčić, representing Montenegro.

SOURCES EU Press Release

- <http://www.wbc-inco.net/goto/5218.html>
Montenegrin Ministry of Education and Science
- <http://www.wbc-inco.net/org/88.html>

Potočnik Visits Albania

On May 5 and 6, 2008, Commissioner Potočnik will visit Tirana and meet the authorities to discuss the state of research cooperation between the European Union and Albania. The visit takes place shortly after the Memorandum of Understanding associating Albania to FP7 was signed and applied.

Bosnia and Herzegovina Soon Participating in FP7

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is committed to participate in the 7th Framework Programme in order to enable its private companies, public organisations and individual researchers to actively participate in FP7 programmes and projects.

It is expected that the Memorandum of Understanding associating BiH to FP7 will be signed soon as the commitment to participate in FP7 has been confirmed during a session of the Council of the Ministries of BiH, held on January 24, 2008.

Soon this initial information shall be completed with some additional input from the Ministry of Civil Affairs of BiH. Thus, Bosnian Herzegovinian researchers will be participating in FP7 on equal footing as of January 2009.

AUTHOR Alma Hasanović

- <http://www.wbc-inco.net/users/2759.html>
Ministry of Civil Affairs
- <http://www.wbc-inco.net/org/527.html>

EU Foreign Ministers Discuss the Western Balkans

The renewal of the Thessaloniki Agenda – which in 2003 guaranteed all Western Balkan countries (WBCs) a European future – was in the focus of the informal meeting of EU foreign ministers held at the congress centre in Brdo, Slovenia, on March 29, 2008. A Brdo Presidency Statement titled "New focus on the Western Balkans" was issued.

The representatives of the governments of the Member States of the European Union, the candidate countries, the potential candidate countries of the WBCs, the Secretary General of the Council/High Representative, Javier Solana, the European Commissioner for Enlargement, Olli Rehn, and the European Commissioner for External Relations, Benita Ferrero-Waldner met in Brdo on the March 29, 2008, at the occasion of the informal Foreign Ministers' meeting. The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Kosovo, the EU Special Representative for Kosovo, the OHR/EUSR for Bosnia and Herzegovina, the EUSR/HoD for the FYR of Macedonia and the Secretary General of the Regional Co-operation Council (RCC) were also present.

- I. The Presidency underlined that it is in our common interest that the WBCs proceed as rapidly as possible with political and economic reforms, reconciliation and protection of ethnic minority population, and progress towards the EU. The progress achieved through the Stabilisation and Association Process in the recent years needs to be built upon and made irreversible by the region's determination to take on and implement all conditions and commitments set within the Stabilisation and Association Process.
- II. A fresh impetus needs to be given to the Thessaloniki agenda and the Salzburg document. The Presidency welcomed the Commission's "**Communication on the Western Balkans**" as an important contribution to that effort, as well as the opportunity for discussion offered by the meeting in Brdo.
- III. There remain significant challenges that should inspire both the EU and the region to make a defining move ahead towards the EU. Of particular importance are **regional co-operation in the area of energy and transport**, including the intended **Transport Community Treaty**, as well as in **civil protection**. The Presidency also welcomed the transformation of the Stability Pact into the **RCC** in Sofia in February, building on the remarkable legacy of its predecessor, while assuming increased responsibility by the countries of the region. In the area of support to socio-economic development, the **Infrastructure Projects Facility** and the plans to establish a **Western Balkans Investment Framework** are very significant. Support to civil society development through a **Civil Society Facility**, but also **cultural** and **inter-parliamentary co-operation** may play an important role. In strengthening **good governance**, the **Regional School of Public Administration**, as well as co-operation in the area of justice, freedom and security including, inter alia through **Organised Crime Threat Assessment**, a **co-operation with EUROPOL** and **SECI Centre** in Bucharest are also very relevant.

One area that deserves particular attention is the promotion of **people-to-people contacts** between the WBCs and the EU, above all of the younger generation, as it enables the citizens from the region to get to know the true image of the EU. This is all the more important for the countries of former Yugoslavia that have already had experience of visa free travel before 1990. At the same time, it is essential that the EU visa policy adequately addresses the present concerns of Member States and their citizens regarding illegal immigration, cross-border crime, public order, internal security, job markets and their international relations.

After the **Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements** with five countries of the WBCs that came into force in January 2008, the next concrete

goal, as already foreseen by the Thessaloniki Agenda, shall be the liberalisation of the visa regime. To this end, the European Commission is in the process of opening a **dialogue on visa liberalisation** with all countries of the region. This dialogue should set down realistic priorities and criteria – roadmaps – for enabling visa-free travel. The Presidency welcomed the Commission's efforts to prepare the roadmaps as soon as possible.

Substantial progress in accession negotiations with **Croatia** will be possible in 2008, provided that the country makes significant progress in a number of key reform areas and meets the benchmarks set. Likewise, steps towards an opening of accession negotiations with the **FYR of Macedonia** are possible this year by implementing the priorities identified within the Accession Partnership in February 2008 without delay. The progress recently made by **Montenegro and Albania** should also be recognised and could serve as an inspiration for other countries of the region. In order to reach the next stage in their relation with the EU, both countries need to accelerate the implementation of the Interim Agreement and make further efforts in building institutional capacities in public administration and in the judiciary.

Signing the Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the **EU and Bosnia and Herzegovina** is now within reach, provided that the police reform is implemented as the first step in the broad range of measures to be adopted along its way to the EU. **Serbia** can accelerate its progress towards the EU, including acquiring candidate status in the near future, but its political leadership, both present and future, should confirm their commitment to the European perspective and fulfill the remaining conditions for signing the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, as initialed last November. It is also essential that Serbia respects previous commitments to refrain from inflammatory rhetoric or activities, which might endanger the security situation in the region.

The EU agreed in February that Member States will, in accordance with national practice and international law, decide on their relations with **Kosovo**, and that it will continue to co-operate with other international actors to preserve stability in the region, which has a clear EU perspective.

- IV. The Presidency believes that recent events in the region warrant renewed assurance by the Union to the people and countries of the region about the priority it attaches to the success of the enlargement process in the WBCs. This process – notwithstanding the process of ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, which is of paramount importance – must be sustained. The EU perspective must be made tangible and visible. People across the region should well understand the meaning of their choice for a European future.

The established conditionalities – of which political criteria are of particular importance – remain an essential element of the enlargement process. At the same time, the Presidency recalls that the perspective of the EU membership has, throughout the history of the Union, served as driving forces for the consolidation of political and economic development in the EU aspiring countries.

EC Communication on the Western Balkans

Recent communication from the European Commission (EC) on “Western Balkans: Enhancing the European perspective”, which was adopted on March 5, 2008, has provided new insights into the state of the art of cooperation.

Overall this communication gives renewed impetus to the enlargement process of the Western Balkan Countries (WBCs). The role research plays in facilitating the integration of the WBCs in the EU is very well underlined with a special reference to the Steering Platform for its structuring position in strengthening the research capacity in the region. Scholarships for WBC students are also on the agenda as well as opening up programmes to enable contacts between scientific and educational institutions. This communication should be considered together with the working document, which lists the actions taken so far and also envisages some new actions for the WBCs. The idea of regional centres of competence appears interesting.

LINKS *Communication from the Commission*

- <http://www.wbc-inco.net/doc/3293.html>
and the working document
- <http://www.wbc-inco.net/doc/3295.html>

Study “Needs/Offers Matrix” Updated

Within the framework of the Information Office for the Steering Platform on Research for Western Balkan Countries (see-science.eu), the Austrian Research Promotion Agency (FFG) has conducted a survey in 2007, which was updated in 2008, aiming to assess the R&D needs of the Western Balkan Countries (WBCs) and the funding programmes that are available to serve those needs. In this report the **R&D needs** of the WBCs have been examined in detail. Short country based analyses have been made to indicate the specific needs of each country. Concerning the Offer Part, the multilateral and bilateral funding programmes in response to the R&D needs of the WBCs have been identified and explained in detail, including objectives, scope, funding types, etc.

Under the “**International Funding Programmes for WBCs**” heading, three new funding sources have been added: Eurostars, European Investment Bank and Erasmus Mundus. Two new Organisations/Programmes from Austria (ADA) and Switzerland (RRPP) have been included. During the updating procedure the national authorities of the region were also asked to confirm or correct the available data. All given feedbacks are included in the Bilateral Agreements table, together with the other sources indicated in the report.

The report is available for download <http://www.wbc-inco.net/doc/1005.html>

AUTHOR *Berna Windischbaur* ▪ <http://www.wbc-inco.net/users/2718.html>

- Austrian Research Promotion Agency*
- <http://www.wbc-inco.net/org/125.html>

Funding Programmes for WBC

Community Programme (and period covered)	Croatia	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	Albania	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Montenegro	Serbia
7th Research Framework Programme (2007-13)*	As of 1.1.2007 (MoU signed 13.6.07)	As of 1.1.2007 (MoU signed 13.6.07)	As of 1.1.2008 (MoU signed 17.12.07)		As of 1.1.2008 (MoU signed 25.1.08)	As of 1.1.2007 (MoU signed 13.6.07)
Competitiveness and Innovation (2007-13)*	Intelligent Energy-Europe	As of 1.1.2007 (MoU signed 2.10.07)				
	Entrepreneurship and Innovation	As of 1.1.2008 (MoU signed on 9.10.07)	As of 1.1.2007 (MoU signed 18.10.07)	MoU currently being negotiated	MoU to be signed on 4.3.08	MoU currently being negotiated
	ICT Policy Support	As of 1.1.2008 (MoU signed on 25.10.07)				
Lifelong Learning	Envisaged for 2009 or 2010	Envisaged for 2009 or 2010				
Culture (2007-13)*	As of 1.1.2007 (MoU signed 4.5.07)	As of 1.1.2008 (Exchange of letters completed on 14.1.08)				As of 1.1.2008 (MoU signed 6.2.08)
Europe for Citizens (2007-13)*	As of 2008 (MoU signed 25.9.07)					
Media 2007 (2007-13)	MoU to be signed March 2008					
Customs 2007-2013*	As of 28.8.2006 (MoU signed on same day)	Envisaged for 1.9.2008				Envisaged for 1.9.2008
Youth in Action	Envisaged for 2009 or 2010	Envisaged for 2009 or 2010				
Progress: Community programme for employment and social solidarity (2007-13)*	As of 1.1.2008 (MoU signed on 16.8.07)	As of 1.1.2007 (MoU signed 6.12.07)				As of 1.1.2007 (MoU signed 12.10.07)
Fiscalis 2007-2013	As of 28.8.2006 (MoU signed on same day)	Envisaged for 1.9.2008				
Interoperable Delivery of European e-Government services to Administrations, Business and Citizens (IDABC) (2005-09)*	As of 1.1.2007 (MoU signed on 26.10.06)					

* Programmes recommended by the Commission for participation of the potential candidate countries. Also Media 2007 (2007-13) and Safer Internet+ (2005-08) are recommended.

SOURCE *Commission Staff Working Document* ▪ <http://www.wbc-inco.net/doc/3295.html>

An Example from the Needs/Offers Matrix

The following information is quoted from the see-science.eu Needs/Offers Matrix report and illustrates the information provided through the example of the NATO Science for Peace Programme, which has the next deadline on **June 1, 2008**. This programme provides many opportunities to institutions and researchers of various means of collaboration on priority research areas. The areas are defined in detail under the "defence against terrorism", and "other threats to security" headings. On the other hand, different national priorities are also considered among the defined priority areas.

A total of 23 different funding programmes are covered in the Needs-Offer Matrix report.

NATO Science for Peace Programme

Introduction:

The programme aims to link science and society through projects in security, environmental sustainability and other defined priorities of its partner nations. The SPS Programme enables NATO to demonstrate its commitment to practical, visible projects with tangible output and to contribute to security, stability and solidarity among nations, by applying the best technical expertise to problem solving.

Duration:

Ongoing programme

Objectives:

Various Grant mechanisms

A) Collaborative Grants In Priority Research Areas

- **Advanced Research Workshops (SPS ARWs):** to organise expert workshops to exchange views at the frontiers of a subject; aims at identifying directions for future research and promoting working relationships between scientists from different countries and with different professional experience.
- **Advanced Study Institutes (SPS ASIs):** to organise high level tutorial courses to make in-depth analysis on a subject to advance together with the internationally recognised lecturers.
- **Advanced Training Course (SPS ATC):** designed to enable specialists in NATO countries to share their expertise with trainees from partner and Mediterranean Dialogue countries.
- **Collaborative Linkage Grants (SPS CLGs):** to provide assistance to research groups or institutions in the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and the Mediterranean Dialogue to collaborate on research projects.
- **Science for Peace projects (SPS SFPs):** to collaborate on multi-year applied R&D projects in partner or Mediterranean Dialogue countries.

B) Computer Networking and Electronic Communication support for Partner Countries

- **Advanced Networking Workshops (SPS ANWs):** to enable workshops in partner countries, to harmonise their network policy at a national and international level, to enable the training of qualified network managers and to convene expert meetings to enhance the use of electronic communication.
- **Networking Infrastructure Grants (SPS NIGs):** to enable research institutions in partner countries to improve their telecommunication facilities and to enhance the use of such facilities.

Eligible Countries in WBC:

All WBCs are so-called „NATO Partner Countries“, eligible to participate in the NATO SPS activities. Participation rule: 1 researcher from NATO country, 1 from an eligible partner country. Projects can be submitted always throughout the year. Three deadlines are set each year to meet the three review sessions of the scientific advisory panels.

Conditions of funding:

SPS programme priorities identified by the partner countries

- **Albania:** Environmental Security, Information Technology (IT), Biotechnology-Bioscience, Forecast and Prevention of Catastrophes, Human & Societal Dynamics, Food Security.
- **Bosnia & Herzegovina:** Environmental Security, IT, Forecast and Prevention of Catastrophes, Defence Against Terrorism.
- **Croatia:** Environmental Security, Forecast and Prevention of Catastrophes, Human & Societal Dynamics, Border Security / Transport Security.
- **FYR of Macedonia:** Environmental Security, IT, Biotechnology-Bioscience, Human & Societal Dynamics, Food Security, Advance Technology.
- **Montenegro:** Environmental Security, IT, Biotechnology-Bioscience, Forecast and Prevention of Catastrophes, Human & Societal Dynamics.
- **Serbia:** Environmental Security, IT, Biotechnology-Bioscience, Forecast and Prevention of Catastrophes, Human & Societal Dynamics, Food Security, Advance Technology, Defence Against Terrorism.

Budget:

The amount of funding of many of the funding types is decided on a case-to-case basis.

More information:

General information on the programme:

<http://www.nato.int/science/>

Grant mechanisms:

http://www.nato.int/science/nato_funded_activities/grant_mechanisms.htm

http://www.nato.int/science/nato_funded_activities/pdf/country_priorities.pdf

Correspondence to WBC needs:

- Upgrade and renewal of ICT infrastructures
- Enhancement of regional co-operation
- Definition of priority research areas
- Measures against brain drain/brain waste
- Support of mobility of researchers
- Specific support to basic research
- Specific support to applied research
- Strengthen connection between basic and applied research

LINK Download the full report from

- <http://www.wbc-inco.net/doc/1005.html>

IPA Benefits Research Infrastructure

On March 4-5, 2008, the Slovenian presidency organised a conference on research infrastructures and their structuring effect within the European Research Area. In focus was also the usefulness of the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA) for research capacity building.

In general, the conference was aiming to demonstrate that research infrastructure is very important for Europe's competitiveness. From the different presentations and interventions it could be retained that establishing infrastructure in Europe is complex but worthwhile. Above all, it requires substantial investment and hence, different sources of finance are necessary. For Member States, the Structural Funds (SF) for the period 2007-2013 foresee a necessary investment of about 99 billion euro to support R&D capacity building, including ICT. This is a major step forward and a success, compared to what was possible under the SF in the previous period.

The European Commission represented by Tania Friederichs (DG Research, International Cooperaton Directorate) took advantage of this conference to present the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA) of which the beneficiaries are the enlargement countries (all Western Balkan Countries and Turkey). She recommended examining closely the different possibilities under IPA that could be used to strengthen the research capacity. Member States that had experience with using SF for research capacity and in particular their neighbouring Member States (Slovenia, Austria, Bulgaria, Romania, and Greece) should assist the enlargement countries in this process, as this would benefit both, the region and Europe's competitiveness.

The possibilities under IPA, of which the main purpose is to assist in complying with the Copenhagen criteria, are limited. But with some creativity and good internal planning and programming, IPA does offer possibilities to support research capacity. This was certainly the case for the part on regional competitiveness, where it could be used to support regional centres of competence on important areas for the region and Europe, such as on environment, public health or energy efficiency.

Attaining research infrastructure step by step

It is important that research infrastructure does not only comprise large infrastructure facilities but also smaller facilities, within universities and research institutes, which could be supported. As explained by Manfred Horvat, the so-called stairway case approach should again be considered, which means that research infrastructure should be attained step by step. In doing so all possible financial support should be used. There should be active consideration of how IPA can be used for research infrastructure. The idea of having a workshop to examine closer the possibility of using IPA for research capacity was immediately taken up by Commissioner Potočnik in the closing speech.

This idea launched in Slovenia should be followed up quickly. As discussed at the meeting in Thessaloniki, the Steering Platform for Research can play an important role in this exercise.

AUTHOR Tania Friederichs

- <http://www.wbc-inco.net/users/161.html>
- European Commission DG Research
- <http://www.wbc-inco.net/org/99.html>

Invitations to the WBCs by ESFRI

At the 23rd meeting of the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI) on December 7, 2008, a proposal was unanimously accepted to open ESFRI to newly associated countries. ESFRI was launched by the Council of Ministers in April 2002.

The role of ESFRI is to support a coherent approach to policy-making on research infrastructures in Europe, and to act as an incubator for international negotiations about concrete initiatives. It aims at providing Europe with the necessary research infrastructures for world class research and training. ESFRI brings together representatives of ministries in charge of research. An official invitation has been sent to all Ministers of Science of the Western Balkan countries. They are invited to nominate a representative as a delegate to ESFRI and attend one of the following forum meetings: June 13, 2008; September 25, 2008, in Brussels and December 11, 2008, in Paris.

ESFRI, which is chaired by Carlo Rizzuto since March 7, 2008, shall support the development of policies and best practices for existing and planned research infrastructures. The ESFRI European Roadmap for Research Infrastructures, published in 2006, is its major planning instrument.

LINK *European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures*
 ▪ <http://www.wbc-inco.net/org/492.html>

Research Infrastructures as Part of the ERA Green Paper

In the context of the follow-up to the Green Paper "The European Research Area: New Perspectives" adopted by the Commission on April 4, 2007, seven expert groups have been set up by DG Research - one for each dimension of ERA identified in the Green Paper. "Developing world-class research infrastructures" was the name of one of the expert groups, whose overall objective was to identify and define possible measures and actions taking into account existing expertise, available evidence and the major elements stemming from the debate launched by the Green Paper. Chairman Norbert Kroo highlights the benefits of world-class research infrastructures (RIs), in terms of generating discoveries and opportunities for new industrial applications, serving as beacons for high-tech companies, research establishments and educational institutions, attracting talented researchers and creating new economic activities and fresh employment opportunities. The obvious constraints on budgets make prioritisation and a coherent policy on EU level needed.

ESFRI and its roadmap play an essential part in the decision making process for pan-European RIs, transparency of procedures and involvement of all relevant stakeholders is needed to move further and national as well as regional planning needs to exploit synergies and complementarities as far as possible. Efficiency of funding and funding levels need to be raised and improved. Adequate legal and governance structures need to be set up and used, management guidelines and access policy criteria need to be developed, as well as access to global research infrastructures sought. The world leading e-infrastructure networks also need to be further developed. Those and other recommendations are available in the expert group report, which also provides a short analysis of the responses to the public consultation.

LINK <http://www.wbc-inco.net/doc/5451.html>

SEE Transnational Co-operation Programme

The Transnational Co-operation Programme South East Europe (TCP-SEE) is part of the new European Territorial Cooperation Objective for the programming period 2007 - 2013. The general aim of TCP-SEE is to foster a balanced territorial development and territorial integration within the co-operation area.

As a overall objective, TCP-SEE shall develop transnational partnerships on matters of strategic importance to improve the territorial, economic and social integration process and to contribute to cohesion, stability and competitiveness.

TCP-SEE supports transnational cooperation projects between partners that promote economic, environmental and social development by elaborating joint solutions, concrete outputs and results enabling further implementations, e.g. further initiatives and investments. The programme focuses on four thematic priorities: innovation, environment, accessibility, and sustainable urban development.

Activities to foster innovation in the region are called for in the first priority axis (Facilitation of innovation and entrepreneurship). The Western Balkan countries are fully eligible for this programme.

SEE poses a unique landscape to improve integration, competitiveness and consequently territorial cohesion. While the Part of the internal Cohesion Policy of the EU, TCP-SEE actively seeks the full participation of non-Member States in the programme area, which benefit from the external Pre-Accession Assistance and the European Neighbourhood Policy funding.

The programme area includes 16 countries with a total population of 200 million and presents one of the most diverse and complex transnational co-operation areas in Europe. It is the only transnational programme area with such a large number of non-EU countries participating (candidates, potential candidates and third countries).

The eligible area for TCP-SEE comprises Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia, FYR of Macedonia, Greece, Hungary, parts of Italy, Serbia, Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia, Republic of Moldova and parts of Ukraine.

LINK Further information on the operational programme
 ▪ <http://www.wbc-inco.net/doc/3230.html>

Enterprise Europe Network Launched

The European Commission (EC) has recently launched the Enterprise Europe Network, which is an EU-wide support network for enterprises.

Made up of over 500 contact points engaging 4,000 members of staff, the network includes all EU countries as well as additional third countries. Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia and the FYR of Macedonia have also managed to get a successful bid in the new network.

It is intended to act as a one-stop shop to assist enterprises, particularly SMEs. The network has a set of concrete services: assisting companies in going international; innovation, new products and grasping opportunities in the single market; accessing EU projects and funding; and providing feedback to the EC.

The network is funded out of the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programme (EIP) pillar of the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP). It replaces the network of Euro Info Centre and the Innovation Relay Centres that previously operated throughout Europe. Günter Verheugen, the Commissioner responsible for the network said, 'The new Enterprise Europe Network is a milestone in the Commission's integrated policy for promoting entrepreneurship and growth of enterprises in Europe. I call on all entrepreneurs in the EU and beyond to use it to the best of their needs'.

LINK Further information on the Enterprise Europe Network
 ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/doc/5481.html>
 List of the local Enterprise Europe partners in the EU and beyond
 ▪ <http://wbc-inco.net/doc/5479.html>

Nineteen New Projects for Research Co-operation

The ASO-countries are funding 19 new projects for research co-operation and networking between Austria and South Eastern Europe.

In October 2007 the Austrian Science and Research Liaison Offices launched two Calls for Proposals for research co-operation and networking with a total funding of € 239.000, provided by the Austrian Ministry of Science and Research:

1. Call for Proposals: "South Eastern Europe's Scientific Response to: Biodiversity protection, climate change and energy scarcity";
2. Call for Proposals: "Research Cooperation and Networking between Austria, Kosovo/UNMIK and South Eastern Europe" (launched within the Austria – Kosovo Partnership for Higher Education and Research <http://www.wbc-inco.net/link/2501.html>): this Call for Proposals had no thematic restriction, but a networking approach and added value for solving society driven, current or upcoming problems in Kosovo, which had to be shown.

In total, 39 eligible projects with partners from Austria, the ASO-countries Bulgaria and Slovenia, as well as Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, FYR of Macedonia, Kosovo/UNMIK, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia have been evaluated during the last weeks from local, regional and thematic experts. On March 17, 2008, the evaluation meetings took place in Vienna: Ten selected projects within the Kosovo-Call and nine projects within the Environment-Call were recommended for funding by the evaluators. During the next four weeks, the contract negotiations with the project coordinators will take place. The projects will start at the earliest in May 2008. A list of all funded projects will be available at the ASO website at the end of April 2008.

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Marie Curie: New Call for Initial Training Network Open

The Initial Training Network (ITN) call has a budget of 185 million euro and the deadline is on September 2, 2008. It is a great opportunity for research organisations in the Western Balkans to receive funding in order to build up capacities of their young researchers in co-operation with other institutions.

The ITN call was launched on April 4, 2008 with the deadline on September 2, 2008. This Marie Curie action aims at supporting training and career development at a prestigious organisation and is open to all thematic topics. It aims to improve mostly young researchers' career perspectives in both public and private sectors by broadening their scientific and generic skills, including those related to technology transfer and entrepreneurship.

It is recommended to download the related documents from CORDIS, especially the Guide for Applicants that includes evaluation criteria and the application procedure.

The action will be implemented by supporting competitively selected networks of organisations from different countries engaged in research training. The networks will be built on a joint research training programme, responding to well identified training needs in defined scientific areas, with appropriate reference to interdisciplinary and newly emerging supra-disciplinary fields.

Activity lines open for funding

Support will be provided for:

- Recruitment of researchers (who are still within the first five years of their careers in research) for initial training.
- Recruitment of Senior Visiting Scientists of outstanding stature in international training and collaborative research to strengthen transfer of knowledge.
- Networking activities, organisation of workshops and conferences, involving the participants' own research staff and external researchers.

Training will be primarily focused on scientific and technological knowledge through research on individual, personalised projects, complemented by substantial training modules addressing other relevant skills and competences. Examples include research in the field of management and financing of research projects and programmes, intellectual property rights and other exploitation methods of research results, entrepreneurship, ethical aspects, communication and societal outreach.

The action will be primarily for the recruitment of researchers from Member States and associated countries, but also open to researchers from third countries. Researchers are normally required to undertake trans-national mobility (i.e. move from one country to another), when taking up appointment.

Eligible participants

Participants are organisations that are members of a network selected by the Commission, which contributes directly to the implementation of the joint research training programme of the network, by recruiting and employing and/or hosting eligible researchers, by providing specialised training modules or by participating in other dedicated actions. Therefore, ITNs are typically set-up as multi-site projects.

However, single research organisations or twinning of research institutions may also be eligible to participate in this action. In such cases, participants would need to clearly demonstrate that the necessary elements of the research training programme are effectively addressed through well-established, international collaborations with other research institutions without the latter formally being part of the network.

LINK *CORDIS website for Initial Training Networks*
 ▪ <http://www.wbc-inco.net/link/5556.html>

Partner Analysis of FP6

WBC-INCO.NET has carried out a brief analysis to see, which were the main partner countries for the Western Balkans in the 6th Framework Programme.

Information about jointly submitted project proposals in the 6th Framework Programme were obtained by the European Commission and the resulting links between the countries from the Western Balkans and others participating in FP6 were analysed. The statistics were evaluated by country and for the whole regions. If you are interested in the underlying tables, please contact Elke Dall, author of this article.

Greece is the most important co-operation partner for **Albanian** institutions in FP6. Greek partners represent almost 8 % of all links of Albanian institutions in FP6, whereas 4 % of all links (i.e. 19 out of a total of 456) have been with German partners.

For institutions from **Bosnia and Herzegovina** most links were within the WBCs. **Croatia**, which is by far the country with most links (2359 counted), co-operates intensely with Germany, UK and Italy.

The **FYR of Macedonia** again is strongly entangled with Greek and Serbian/Montenegrin partners, but also with Germans.

Also the Netherlands are strong co-operation partners for researchers from **Serbia and Montenegro**, which was registered as one country in the EC database for the whole period of FP6.

Obviously some countries submit far less proposals than others (e.g. Austria compared to the UK), but this data was not available and therefore not taken into account in this evaluation. Thus, the assessment is from the perspective of the WBCs, which are their major co-operation partners.

Most important co-operation partners for WBC

Overall, the "**top 10 co-operation partners**" in FP6 were:

1.	Germany
2.	UK
3.	Italy
4.	France
5.	Greece
6.	Netherlands
7.	Spain
8.	Austria, Belgium
10.	Slovenia

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Albania Intensifies Bilateral Co-operation in Scientific Research

The policies of the Government of Albania in the realm of activities in S&T development are an integral part of the generic policies on the economic and social development of the country, expressing the positive attitude of the state towards such activities. Albania now wants to further intensify bilateral co-operation in scientific and technological activities.



The Government of Albania is responsible for creating the legal and organisational framework for the S&T activities. The Ministry of Education and Science (MOES) is responsible to manage them by supporting the activities of the relevant state institutions. But MOES encourages also the development of S&T activities outside the state institutions, e.g. in

private entities (organisations and individuals), NGOs and agencies, which are specifically concerned with scientific research.

The S&T policies are developed by the MOES in close co-operation with the Academy of Science (AS), the line ministries and the other central institutions with the full participation of scientific institutions and higher schools. Subsequently, the policies are submitted to the Council of Higher Education and Science. Alongside the opinion expressed thereof, the policies are brought to the attention of the Council of Ministers in order to be included in the governmental programmes concerning the social and economic development of the country.

The Directorate of Scientific Research (DSR), part of the MOES, programmes and organises its own work in developing national and international programmes for research and development. In this framework, bilateral co-operation is very important for the scientific community.

Bilateral Agreements on S&T Co-operation

Albania has active bilateral agreements with Greece, Italy, FYR of Macedonia and Slovenia and hopes that Austria, Poland and Turkey will ratify agreements in their parliaments in order to sign the executive programmes.

Several agreements were signed in the period of 2005 to 2007, but especially the SEE-ERA.NET project has contributed to the enlargement of bilateral co-operations. In the near future, Albania will intensify its bilateral co-operation and is in discussion with Montenegro, Croatia, Kosovo and France.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has the right to sign new intergovernmental S&T agreements. The MOES is, together with the DSR, responsible for the implementation.

The actions to be financed in the framework of bilateral agreements are:

1. Joint Research Projects (JRP) in priority areas. These may include mobility grants, aiming at permitting individual young researchers from both countries to stay for a short period of time, up to three months, to be trained or participate in research activities at institutes, laboratories and enterprises of the other country.
2. Technical Assistance Projects (TAP) aiming at providing assistance by exchanging equipment, scientific material, documentation, publications and various S&T information, visits of specialists and the mutual demonstration of new technologies.

3. Networking Projects (NP) aiming at the establishment of S&T networks between the institutions and companies of both countries. This may also include contacts between scientists and engineers, facilitating the exchange of S&T information and supporting the organisation of and the participation at conferences, workshops and training seminars of mutual interest. Furthermore, those projects should promote joint publications of the research results and presentations of these results at international conferences in the two countries.

Albania's policies on bilateral as well as multilateral co-operation are based on competitive funding of joint research projects. They are focused on the establishment of the European Research Area.

Submission of proposals

The Joint Committee of Bilateral Agreements on S&T Cooperation invites interested persons and organisations to submit proposals related to the actions and priority areas set out by the two parties.

Proposals for participation in joint projects should include at least one partner from each country, but proposals including at least two partners from each country are favoured, they should be presented using the appropriate form distributed by the relevant parties, should be well documented with clear aims and objectives and should have a duration not exceeding two to three years. Three copies of the proposals should be submitted (one in English language and two in the national language), together with the CVs of the participating scientists, attached to each copy in the respective language. The English copies presented by both parts should be identical.

Evaluation criteria

Evaluation criteria include the participation of young researchers, the participation of the private sector, the scientific quality and the research experience of the teams, the suitability of the proposed methodology, the budget of the project as well as priorities in the project.

The above-named process goes ahead with the full consent and consensus of the other country. The projects will start after signing the Protocol of S&T Cooperation.

During the period 2005 to 2007 Albania had 25 common research projects and 40 mobility projects with Italy, 32 common research projects with Greece, 6 common research projects with FYR of Macedonia and 6 common research projects with Slovenia.

Please see the next article illustrating the Italian-Albanian co-operation as an example.

An Example: Bilateral Cooperation between Albania and Italy

On December 3, 2008, Albania's Education Minister Genc Pollo and Italian Ambassador to Tirana Saba D'Elia signed the third bilateral executive programme of the Agreement of Scientific and Technological (S&T) Cooperation between the Republic of Albania and Republic of Italy.

The agreement was signed in the presence of Albanian Premier Sali Berisha and Italian counterpart Romano Prodi and is valid for the period 2008-2010.

Albania and Italy have recognised the increasing importance of S&T for the economic, social and cultural development. Therefore, they have found the necessity to intensify their collaboration in order to improve the agreement

The agreement opened the new bilateral call for proposals in the areas of health and hospital organisation, agronomy, veterinary and zootechnology, geology and forestalls sciences, energy and environment, urban studies, new technology applied to the alimentary industry, telecommunications, new technology applied to the infrastructure, information for public services and archaeology and protection of cultural heritage. During the first call for proposals 44 mobility proposals have been submitted and 25 were selected.

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Fostering Innovation in Croatia

Since 2000 Croatia made significant effort in establishing the Croatian national innovation system (NIS) and introducing innovation policy (IP) as a specific policy framework for accelerating transition of Croatia towards a knowledge-based economy.



The new impetus for strengthening the Croatian innovation system was provided by the accession negotiations of Croatia with the EU (opened on October 4, 2005), which brought Lisbon and Barcelona targets into the policy agenda of the Croatian government. The perspective of European integration and a wider exposure to competition on the

European and global markets stresses the need for fostering productive use of knowledge through innovation and new technologies. Thus, the innovation policy (IP) has a growing significance for strategic development in Croatia. Currently it is characterised by constant evolution and change towards progress in policy documents, IP programmes and institutional set-up.

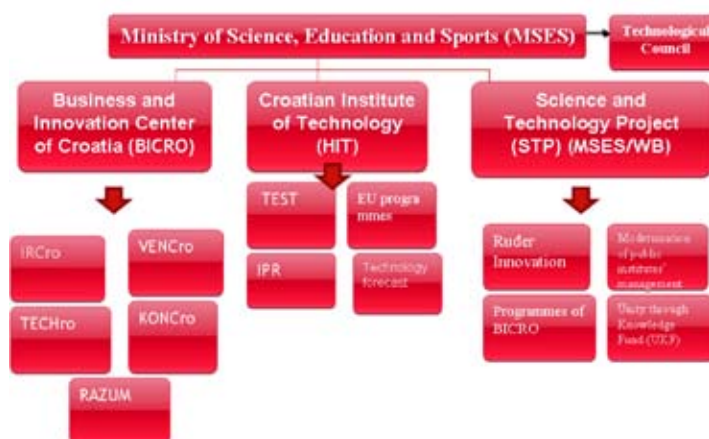
The development of an IP and NIS in Croatia has gone through several phases, since Croatia gained its independence in 1991. Broadly speaking, before 2000 the national IP was mainly perceived as a part of science policy. The importance of the national innovation capacity, science-industry co-operations and the technology capability of companies for structural adjustments to global economic changes was poorly perceived and understood. A new perspective for an innovation system emerged by establishing a separate Directorate for Technology within the Ministry of Science and Technology and a new Ministry for the Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) in 2001. Although these institutions were reorganised in the meantime, they signified a completely new approach to development of SMEs and in supporting technology development and innovation. Nowadays, for example, the Ministry of Economy, Labor and Entrepreneurship (MELE) as one of the pillar institution of the Croatian NIS supports the entrepreneurship with business infrastructure that consists of 27 business centers, 16 business incubators, 6 regional development agencies, 15 economic free zones and 235 entrepreneurial zones, out of which 140 are fully functioning.

The turning point towards an IP and establishing the NIS was made by launching the first IP programme – the Croatian Program for Innovative Technological Development (HITRA) – in 2001 by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports (MSES). HITRA capitalised on the experience and policy learning collected through establishing and managing the technology centres

established in the previous period from 1996 to 2000. Presently, there are 6 technology centres supported by the MSES (Centre for Technology Transfer Zagreb, Technology Centre Split, Centre for Innovative Technology Rijeka, Technology and Innovation Centre Osijek, Research and Development Centre for Mariculture Dubrovnik, Centre for Karsts, Gospić). Besides, there is the Business Innovation Centre of Croatia (BICRO) and the Croatian Institute of Technology (HIT). In addition to the central government initiatives, there is a range of activities on local and regional level on fostering entrepreneurship, innovation and related infrastructure. The most prominent one is the Technology Park Zagreb, the first incubator for technology based business in Croatia - established in 1994 and currently supported by the City of Zagreb (see next article).

A basic idea of HITRA has been to create an institutional, administrative and financial framework for researchers, entrepreneurs and SMEs in order to support them in developing their commercial ideas using national research resources and to provide a framework for direct co-operation between entrepreneurs and scientific institutes/universities. It introduced a range of completely new instruments into the standard science policy, e.g. grants for prototypes and feasibility studies, arrangements of intellectual property rights

Picture 1. INSTITUTIONAL SET-UP AND THE MAIN PROGRAMMES OF THE CROATIAN INNOVATION SYSTEM SUPPORTED BY THE MSES



among partners, subsidies to companies for research and development and favourable commercial or conditional loans in case of highly-risky projects like academic spin-offs. HITRA has also initiated socio-cultural changes in the academic environment with regards to the idea of linking domestic R&D, industrial development and commercial exploitation of research results.

Since 2005 the reforming process of the whole HITRA programme has been in progress supported by the Science and Technology Project (STP), which began in fall of 2005 and is co-financed by the World Bank. Presently, the overall aims and objectives of the IP include key policy targets, measures and stakeholders, which are given in the Science and Technology Policy of the Republic of Croatia 2006-2010 and enacted by the Croatian Government in July 2006. The main stakeholders of the innovation system are the BICRO, HIT, Technology Council of MSES, and STP Implementation unit. They actualise a range of programmes targeted at fostering different parts of innovation system (see diagram on previous page).

BICRO has significantly enlarged and extended its activities since its foundation in 1996 and currently manages the five programmes targeted at the development of the knowledge-based companies (HITRA - RAZUM), technological infrastructure (TehCro), a public-private risk capital fund (VenCro), R&D

services for companies (IRCro) and a business competitiveness upgrading programme (KonCro). HIT was established in 2006 with the main aim to administer the Technology-Related Research and Development Programme (HITRA - TEST), to provide support for the participation of Croatian scientists in the EU framework programmes, to develop an intellectual property rights (IPR) infrastructure for the R&D sector and to foster technology foresight and business intelligence in Croatia.

The Science and Technology Project (STP) covers a substantial part of the Croatian technology programme by co-financing BICRO programmes, e.g. the Unity for Knowledge Fund aimed at a research co-operation with the Croatian Diaspora, the modernisation of management of selected research institutes and the support of the activities of "Ruder Innovation", a newly established centre for commercial application of research results - created at the Institute "Ruder Bošković".

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Good practice: Technology Park Zagreb

The Technology Park Zagreb (TPZ) is the first technology park and entrepreneurial incubator for high technology in Croatia.

TPZ was founded in 1994 in the framework of the KONČAR concern. After the summer of 1998, it was conveyed to the City of Zagreb with the objective to stimulate entrepreneurship and private initiative in the area of development and high technologies within the framework of the programme stimulating the development of crafts and small and medium-sized businesses in the city of Zagreb.

TPZ operates as an entrepreneurial incubator with more than 1,000 m² of premises and fosters small businesses in realisation of their entrepreneurial initiatives in the initial phase of their development and growth. As a part of its programme it also provides expert knowledge and uses free production capacity and office facilities as well as available sources of financing.

Through TPZ, the city of Zagreb carries out projects for economic development in the field of small, innovative, technology-oriented businesses.

The mission of the Technology Park Zagreb includes

1. creating new entrepreneurs in the field of the research and high technologies
2. creating new places of employment and fostering the development of new products
3. helping the innovators and young entrepreneurs in the commercialisation process of their innovations
4. creating a positive atmosphere for entrepreneurship in the society
5. developing the professional, technical and business self-confidence in globalisation

Achievements of TPZ

TPZ represents the highest concentration of entrepreneurs and innovators in the field of development of new products, innovation and high technology in Croatia.

Every year about 30 new products are created and produced in TPZ and launched to the market. The entrepreneurs from TPZ have received 5 patents and 82 awards and recognitions for their innovations and new products as well as for their scientific contributions.

Many of them are exporters to the international market with a focus on Italy, Austria, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Germany, Egypt, Great Britain, Taiwan, India, Turkey, Hungary, Romania, and the FYR of Macedonia.



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Technology Park in the Balkans

The Technology Park Zagreb was covered under the mapping exercise carried out by the see-science.eu.project.Innovation Infrastructures (including science and technology parks, clusters, incubators, etc.) in all Western Balkan countries were surveyed. The survey, updated in April 2008, is available from <http://www.wbc-inco.net/org/3254.html>

Stability Pact Passes Baton to Regional Co-operation Council

In the course of the final Regional Table meeting of the Stability Pact in Sofia on February 27, 2008, the Special Co-ordinator of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe Erhard Busek handed over the responsibility for regional co-operation in South Eastern Europe to the Regional Co-operation Council (RCC) and its Secretary General Hido Biščević.

On the occasion of the Sofia meetings, Erhard Busek, the Special Co-ordinator of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe underlined the significance of this transition, “[t]he future of regional co-operation in South Eastern Europe starts here, today. Flexibility, adaptability, perseverance and tenacity have been prominent features of the Stability Pact’s approach and success. I therefore encourage you [Regional Cooperation Council] to persevere and be tenacious in your efforts to continue on the path of co-operation and integration”. Hido Biščević, the Secretary General of the RCC thanked Busek for the enormous contribution of the Stability Pact to transforming the region and changing the mindsets of its peoples. Ministers of Foreign Affairs of almost every South Eastern European country, as well as a number of European Union Member States Foreign Ministers, were present at the event.

Currently, the RCC is in the process of selecting future staff for its main office in Sarajevo and for the Liaison Office in Brussels. Several people have already been appointed and started working in Sarajevo. Parallel to this process, the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe will continue to function until June 2008 in order to assure the training of the new staff, as well as establishing operational links between numerous initiatives and the new structure of the RCC.

Memorandum of Understanding signed

This can especially be observed in the field of education and research. On the occasion of the twenty-second session of the Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education that took place in Istanbul on May 4-5, 2007, the Stability Pact organised the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding, which was signed by the South Eastern European Ministers responsible for Education, Science and Research. All South Eastern European countries, except for Serbia, signed the document to this date. Thus, the signing countries agreed that education, higher education, science and research are areas of key importance for the future of the South East European region as well as for the EU integration process of the Western Balkan countries. Furthermore, on August 24, 2007, a Declaration of Intent (DoI) to strengthen and deepen the Co-operation in Education, Science and Research with the aim to foster and build Human Capital in South Eastern Europe was signed in Alpbach, Austria. The declaration was signed by Claudia Schmied, Federal Minister of Education, Arts and Culture of the Republic of Austria; Christian Mihai Adomnitei, Minister of Education, Research and Youth of Romania; Johannes Hahn, Federal Minister of Science and Research of the Republic of Austria and was acknowledged by Erhard Busek, on behalf of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe. The signatories agreed to continue active engagement in the partnerships and activities initiated and led by the Task Force Education and Youth of the Stability Pact as well as to widen the field of activities to the area of science and research. Furthermore, the focus shall be expanded to the Fostering and Building Human Capital priority area of the RCC. Moreover, it was offered to other countries of the region to sign a proposal for the establishment of the Task Force Building Human Capital. The aim was to expand the field of involvement of the Task Force to the area of research.

New Task Force Building Human Capital

The Working Table I of the Stability Pact (Democracy), in charge of the portfolio of Fostering and Building Human Capital, took note of the positive reaction of the South Eastern European Ministries of Education and Research to the aforementioned proposal. Moreover, the Working Table I underlined the significance of the new Task Force for creating awareness and facilitating the formulation of recommendations for the RCC in the area of Human Capital. In addition, Austria and Romania as chairman and co-chairman were entrusted by the Stability Pact to elaborate a profile and structure for the new Task Force, which is to be endorsed by April 2008.

The main objective of the new Task Force will be to promote and facilitate regular meetings of high level officials and senior experts from the education, higher education and research sectors of the South East European Co-operation Process region, which should feed into the ministerial levels in this sector. The RCC, the signatories of the Memorandum of Understanding from Istanbul, the Task Force Education and Youth, the Members of the Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE) and the Steering Platform on Research for the Western Balkans are invited to participate in the meetings of the Task Force Fostering and Building Human Capital as its founding members.

The two greatest challenges for this newly formed Task Force will be, firstly, to establish functional links with the RCC and its Senior Expert in charge of this portfolio, and secondly, to efficiently include the research portfolio into the operation of the new Task Force, since its predecessor Task Force Education and Youth did not, in the institutional sense, work in this field.

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The views expressed by the author are not necessarily those of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe.

New Task Force on Education and Research

In December 2007, the Task Force Fostering and Building Human Capital (BHC) was entrusted with the promotion of coherency between education, higher education and research. The Task Force BHC succeeds the Task Force Education and Youth (TFEY) of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe (SEE).

The new task force is in charge of a high-level, regional co-ordination process on Education and Research and the co-ordination of activities in the priority area “Fostering and Building Human Capital” of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). The RCC, which is based in Sarajevo, was inaugurated in February 2008 in Sofia as the successor structure of the Stability Pact and acts within the political framework of the South Eastern European Cooperation Process (SEECPP).

A New Phase in SEE Education Co-operation

As described in the previous article by Srdjan Cvijić, this development marks a further step in a new phase of regional education co-operation in SEE, initialled in May 2007 by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the SEE Ministers responsible for education, science and research. This Memorandum enhances the existing political framework in education co-operation and widens it to the area of research. The changing landscape of regional co-operation in SEE, marked by a shift from assistance to partnership and stronger regional ownership, was also reflected by the transfer of the long-standing Chairmanship of the TFEY of Austria to Romania as a SEECF member state in August 2007. Austria continues to be involved in the further developments as a co-chair.

During its phase-out in the past few months, the TFEY was busy to secure a smooth transition of the existing co-operation networks to the new structures and to anchor these collaborations on the interplay between the so far to a large degree independently acting sectors. After a consultation process with partner ministries in SEE and the RCC on the profile and structure of the new task force which was coordinated by the chair- and co-chairmanship of the TFEY, the process of finalising the establishment of the Task Force Building Human Capital will be completed at the first RCC Board Meeting in May 2008 in Bulgaria. The new Task Force will then become operative and commence with the planning and implementation of events and activities in close collaboration with the Senior Expert for Fostering and Building Human Capital of the RCC.

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Facilitating Knowledge Circulation

For long South Eastern European students and researchers have lacked information on available scholarships, grants and exchange programs in the European Union. This hinders the movement of academic workers between South Eastern European Countries and the EU. A dedicated online database facilitates the flow of information.

Working Table I of the Stability Pact gave special attention to the intensification of knowledge circulation between SEE countries and the European Union. Background research conducted within the Working Table identified two main obstacles for movement of researchers, students and other academic workers: firstly, a restrictive visa regime of the Schengen countries towards most of the SEE countries, and secondly, a lack of information within the Balkans about available scholarships, grants and exchange programmes in the European Union.

To overcome those obstacles, the Stability Pact, supported by numerous civil society organisations in the Balkans, tried to raise awareness within the EU about the social cost of the restrictive visa regimes in the Balkans. The Stability Pact also decided to strongly support the dissemination of information about the available research and study opportunities for SEE students. The Database on Scholarship and Grant Opportunities for SEE and the scholarship and grant promotion conferences held in the region presented a tool for

reaching this objective. Nevertheless, the accessibility of information about exchange programmes and scholarship opportunities remains essentially reserved to restricted elite networks within the SEE states. The motivation of the Stability Pact with regards to this project is best summed up in the words of Marijana Grandits, Director of the Working Table I of the Stability Pact, “[t]he opportunity to be informed about scholarships and grants should not be a privilege of the few, everyone should be able to have the benefit to study in a wider European educational space.” In this way, the Database on Scholarship and Grant Opportunities for SEE was launched at the beginning of 2007. Initially, the database was sought as a web portal, covering the field of social sciences. However, soon the scope of available information was extended to all areas of study. The database provided constantly updated information about more than 200 institutions offering scholarships and grants available to the citizens of the SEE region. Furthermore, the Stability Pact in this matter co-operated with DG Research and its European Researcher's Mobility Portal, as well as the European Network of Mobility Centres, in mutually advertising and promoting mobility of researchers in a wider European area.

Bearing in mind the transformation of the Stability Pact into the RCC (see previous articles) and the overall tendency of establishing regional ownership over the Stability Pact initiatives, the Database on Scholarship and Grant Opportunities for South Eastern Europe is also moving into ‘regional hands’. Henceforth, in the aftermath of the Meeting of the Working Table I in December 2007, at the beginning of 2008, it was decided to hand over the database to the Information Office of the Steering Platform on Research for the Western Balkan Countries. Future improvement and expansion of the Database content will depend on the donor support which is currently being sought. For further information, visit <http://www.wbc-inco.net/sdb/list>

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The RCC in the Competitiveness Agenda for SEE

The international high-level conference “Towards SEE Regional Competitiveness” (Contribution to the EU Policy of Building Knowledge-based Societies) took place in Sofia, Bulgaria, on April 4 to 5, 2008.

The conference was organised by the Balkan Political Club and the Bulgarian SEECF Chairmanship. It tried to define the scope of a Competitiveness Agenda



for South Eastern Europe (SEE) and the role of Regional Co-operation Council (RCC) in promoting knowledge-based economies in the region. The conference discussed achievements, deficiencies, prospects of the knowledge-based economies and possible synergies between different stakeholders. During the opening Daniel Valchev, Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Education and Science and the former President of the Republic of Bulgaria, Zhelyu Zhelev, discussed the present situation of research, education and the specific role of business and governmental interventions. The positive experience and effect of the SEE-ERA.NET and the Steering Platform was mentioned, general principles and the agenda of the RCC with reference to innovation and competitiveness were outlined.

The first session involved Madlen Serban (Task Force Education and Youth) and Anton Dobart (Task Force Fostering and Building Human Capital) as well as Nikos Sidiropoulos from GSRT. The latter introduced the SEE-ERA.NET project, the steps towards the development of a regional programme (ReP-SEE) as well as the possibly funded SEE-ERA.NET on Innovation (currently under evaluation by the European Commission). He also referred to the WBC-INCO.NET project. This panel was completed by Saha Besuhanova, Director General of Hewlett-Packard Bulgaria, who is also active in the Central European Initiative. Ivo Slaus (Croatian Academy of Sciences, President of SEED of the World Academy of Sciences) discussed possible development paths and the applicability of the triple helix model in SEE. Case studies from Belgium, Bulgaria, Slovenia and Romania provided information on recent trends and best practice on a regional and sectoral level.

The organisers prepared a statement on the results of the conference and guidelines for setting up the Competitiveness Agenda for SEE. These conclusions recognise that a significant progress has been made in the last year in laying the foundations of co-operation in the field of research via SEE-ERA.NET and the Steering Platform on Research for the Western Balkan countries.

Recommendations to the Regional Co-operation Council include

- to further support coordination of the national education and research policies in SEE;
- to closely associate and cooperate (e.g. in the form of a Steering Committee) with other stakeholders such as SEE-ERA.NET, the Steering Platform on Research for the Western Balkan countries, the Balkan Political Club, the Interacademy SEE Council, the CEEN platform, the Business Advisory Council established under Stability Pact and other relevant regional governmental and non-governmental organisations;
- to organise a Regional Education-Research-Industry Forum (RERIF) for the elaboration of a Competitiveness Agenda for SEE based on synergies among the existing mechanisms and tools for co-operation in building human capital and economic development.
- to charge the Steering Committee and RERIF with several tasks such as to map excellent research centres, high-tech and middle-tech companies and to support their inclusion in relevant networks in order to establish an academia-industry-government cooperation.

The chairmanship in office of the SEECF will be passed on to Moldova (July 2008 - June 2009), an International Conference on Science and Education Policies to be held September 18-21, 2008 in Chisinau might be included in the SEECF Moldovan Presidency Calendar of Events. The high level representatives from Moldova confirmed their interest to focus on Building Human Capital during the SEECF chairmanship in office.

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INCO-NET Global Issues Workshop

A workshop dealing with "national S&T policies towards global issues" focussing on the activities of the six funded INCO-NET projects took place in Bled/Slovenia, on March 5, 2008.

This workshop was an accompanying event to the Bled Forum on Europe Conference and brought together representatives from all INCO-NETs to discuss a common activity of getting an overview on research programmes dealing with global issues. The workshop defined climate change, biodiversity, poverty reduction/MDG, energy and water scarcity, change in the balance of economic power, food security, migration and conflicts, and health issues as being examples of such global issues.

The objectives of the INCO-NETs in this regard were jointly defined as following:

- To raise awareness for stronger consideration of global issues in R&D priority setting
- To integrate global issues in the mainstream of research (relevant also to those who are not engaged in development)
- To raise awareness of policy makers of the importance of global issues
- To encourage policy learning about how to tackle global issues in research policy

In order to avoid these aspects to be dealt with by each individual INCO-NET in a fragmented, marginalised and un-coordinated way, coordination efforts among INCO-NETs and additional structures to exchange information will be very important. At this stage, it was also important to check if any of the actors coordinating national STI policies focuses on specific global issues. Thus, it was agreed to gather information on these research programmes. Policy learning, sharing of good practices, coordination and maybe at some stage opening of programmes is considered relevant to increase the capacity to cooperate in research on global issues. Committees, ERA-NETs, the research community, policy makers in ministries of science, agriculture and health would be potential users. As an example to gather data on research programmes, the ERA WATCH system was introduced by Totti Könnölä from Joint Research Centres IPTS. The template developed and tested was proposed to be used by the INCO-NETs – especially as the participants agreed that a common template to gather information is desirable. The workshop participants then concluded to focus on one „global issue“ as a pilot case and decided on climate change/global warming and its impact. This is understood to include energy, renewable energy, economic impacts, etc. It was furthermore decided to focus on national R&D programmes (and development programmes with a research component) and national commitments for future programmes. The final focus shall be on making research policy makers more aware to contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

The next steps were summarised as follows:

- First draft on a common methodological approach and template (March 2008, available from the author upon request)
- Consultation and adaptation (April 2008)
- Data collection (May-October 2008)
- Mapping and review, development of a database (winter 2008/09)
- Joint conference (2010 or 2009)

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WBC-INCO.NET Training Workshops

Two training workshops will be organised in the upcoming months in the framework of the WBC-INCO.NET project. The first workshop will take place in Belgrade, Serbia, on May 8, 2008, at the Serbian Chamber of Economy. The training workshops will explain benefits and pitfalls of the participation in FP7 and give hints on project preparation, building of consortia, budgeting, reporting etc. Information sources will be presented as well as lessons-learned from gained experiences will be discussed. The second workshop, with a similar programme and aim, will be organised in Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina) on May 9, 2008. A special focus will lie on the involvement of Academies of Sciences.

A limited number of travel grants is available from the WBC-INCO.NET project. Please register at your earliest convenience by e-mail to: info@sbra.be.

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eIFL.net – Access to knowledge in the Western Balkans

eIFL.net has started its work in 1999 with the goal of bringing affordable access to e-resources to former Soviet Union and South-Eastern and Eastern European countries. Today it has a broader programme and more members than ever before.

eIFL.net started in 1999 as an initiative of the Open Society Institute (OSI), a private grant-making and operating foundation, part of the Soros Foundation network. Its goal was to bring affordable access to e-resources to the countries in its network through cooperation with local libraries. eIFL.net's first focus was on the former Soviet Union countries. For this multi-country initiative, the national site license model was adopted: for the stated price per country an unlimited number of libraries could register for access and an unlimited number of users could use the services simultaneously. The intention of this model was not only to address the growing digital divide between East and West and North and South, but also to ensure equitable access to knowledge within each country.

Independent Foundation since 2003

In 2003, eIFL.net became an independent foundation, incorporated in the Netherlands and with a central office in Rome, Italy. Over the last few years eIFL.net has carried out several waves of membership enlargement as well as programme diversification. Negotiations with publishers to provide access to educational electronic resources at affordable prices and fair conditions for library users and the support to sustainable national library consortia remain at the core of eIFL.net's mission. But additionally, eIFL.net now offers other programs to its membership in the areas of Open Access and Institutional Repositories Copyright for libraries, free and open source software for libraries, as well as many knowledge sharing and networking activities:

eIFL.net has been working with the local communities of libraries in the Western Balkan region since its beginnings in the late 1990s. There has been a continued progress in the modernisation of libraries and an enhanced inclusion into the global information society despite a considerable number of challenges to be yet addressed. These efforts have allowed local library consortia to participate in the whole range of eIFL.net programs actively – an encouraging signal that reflects a broadening of their capacities and the growing agenda of their member institutions.

Regional Co-operation in Western Balkans

As a broad regional overview, when eIFL.net started to cooperate with the region, access and dissemination of information was lagging behind with respect to their Western neighbours. This has several reasons, including external factors, such as the worsening economic and communications infrastructure conditions resulting from the war years in the 1990s. At the same time, insufficient linkages with the education and research systems of other countries in the region and internationally contributed to lower the profile of cultural and educational institutions remarkably, although there are few exceptions.

Access to Educational Electronic Resources

While negotiations with publishers to provide access to educational electronic resources at affordable prices and fair conditions for library users constitute the first pillar of eIFL.net work in the Western Balkans, providing assistance in the building and development of local library consortia became the second pillar.

This program began with the explicit objective of encouraging the organisation of local libraries under coordinated efforts in order to share costs, avoid overlapping of initiatives and level up their bargaining status vis-à-vis the information industry. In fact, by engaging with the country-wide community of libraries, eIFL.net has enabled the building of national library consortia in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNMIK/Kosovo, FYR of Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia with a total membership of 373 libraries. Besides supporting the creation of local networks of libraries in almost every Balkan member country, eIFL.net has also attempted and encouraged to foster a greater regional co-operation based on the exchange of knowledge and experiences and showing success stories at national level as an inspiration for others.

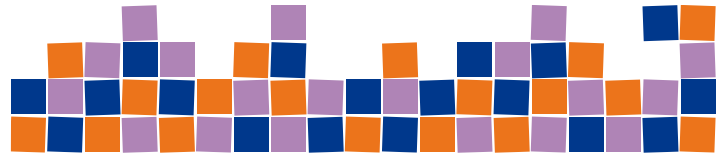
Consortium Building Grants

In order to facilitate the set up of the consortia and the kick-off of activities, eIFL.net has awarded several consortium building grants. Once a consortium is formed, the local community of librarians designates a main contact person, the so-called country co-ordinator, whose tasks include keeping eIFL.net abreast of local progress and needs and making sure that eIFL.net news and updates on its services are widely and efficiently distributed at the country level.

eIFL.net and every WBC has signed a Memorandum of Understanding. Also, a yearly membership fee applies, based on a wide set of socioeconomic criteria and human development indexes, in the attempt to make it as fair and realistic as possible.

Examples of achievements and good practices are highlighted further in the full document provided at <http://www.wbc-inco.net/doc/5488.html>.

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SEE-ERA.NET Spotlights

DG Research: Presentation of SEE-ERA.NET's White Paper, February 28, 2008

The research co-operation with the Western Balkan countries constitutes a priority for the European Research Area, and the SEE-ERA.NET. The White Paper on overlaps, gaps and opportunities provides concrete recommendations on how to implement changes and actions to strengthen this co-operation. To inform the European Commission about the results of the paper, a meeting was organised under the patronage of Alessandro Damiani from DG Research in Brussels on February 28, 2008 with participants from several other DGs. The presentations were followed by an open discussion on how to contribute to the overall objective of facilitating the integration of the Western Balkan countries through research co-operation.

As a result of this meeting, future actions along three lines were proposed:

- A high level of participation of the Western Balkan countries in the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) shall be assured.
- The further overall integration of the Western Balkan countries into the European Research Area and the use of all instruments for that purpose shall be encouraged.
- Integrated research policies to strengthen research capacity at national level shall be designed.

New developments based on the SEE-ERA.NET White Paper

One of the major recommendations of the SEE-ERA.NET White Paper is to develop RTD activities in 4 areas:

- to launch further region-wide joint calls for proposals,
- to tackle "innovation" in the context of the Western Balkan countries,
- to enhance "mobility",
- and to continue with the implementation of tailor made accompanying measures.

First, they submitted a SEE-ERA.NET PLUS project proposal, which will allow the consortium to launch a joint call for research projects with a top-up funding of the European Commission of one third of the whole project-funding budget. First an SEE-ERA.NET PLUS project proposal, which will allow the consortium to issue a joint call for research projects with the addition of a top-up funding of the European Commission of one third of the whole project-funding budget.

In this way a budget of e.g. 2 million euro will be boosted up to 3 million euro, thus providing a substantially bigger sum of funding for researchers in the EU and South Eastern Europe (SEE). The second project proposal submitted is the SEE-ERA.NET on Innovation, which will allow the consortium to develop a consistent innovation approach for the region with the ultimate goal to upgrade the innovation potential in the region. This will also allow the region to prepare for initiatives, such as ERA-SME, the ERA-NET for Innovation and Small and Medium Sized Enterprises in Europe. The mobility issue will be further dealt with in the "mother" project SEE-ERA.NET by the work package leaders from Romania.

Herman Potočnik-Noordung Award

Applications to receive the SEE-ERA.NET "Herman Potočnik Noordung Award for donations within the framework of RTD collaboration with Western Balkan Countries" can still be handed in. Closing date for applications is April 30, 2008. The award will be given for donations either in the form of (second hand) scientific equipment or financial means to purchase or develop the needed infrastructure in Western Balkan countries with a value expected to be above 20.000 euro. The donations and the donors will then be presented in the frame of a special EU presidency event in Ljubljana, Slovenia. A special award will be given to outstanding projects selected by an international committee.

More information and the application form you can find at <http://www.wbc-inco.net/link/2199.html>

Management training for science administrators from the WBCs

A training workshop was successfully held in Bonn, Germany, on December 3-7, 2007, as an accompanying measure of SEE-ERA.NET's Pilot Joint Call by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research of Germany (BMBF) and its International Bureau. Aim of this measure was to support the further development and differentiation of the national Science and Technology (S&T) system and S&T policy in the Western Balkan countries by benefiting from the German experiences and knowledge. Science administrators from the respective ministries of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the FYR of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia participated in the management training in Bonn, Germany. The participants of the management training were introduced to the national S&T system and S&T policy of the Federal Republic of Germany including relevant aspects of European and international co-operation. Furthermore, they got an overview on the responsibilities of the institutions. The workshop deepened their knowledge on the instruments and the administrative procedures for the implementation of the respective national and bilateral S&T funding programmes and the promotion of the participation in the European Framework Programme. The participants used the opportunity to get an insight into the practical work in important areas of science administration and finally entered into an exchange of experiences.

Project Internals

The previous SEE-ERA.NET coordinator Peter Mayr will move to Brussels and work in DG RTD in the INCO department. Evelina Santa will take over his responsibilities from May 1, 2008. As Florian Gruber will now mainly be dealing with the Southeast Asian INCO-NET (SEA-EU-NET) as work package leader for "Analysis, Monitoring, and Review", the SEE-ERA.NET work package 7 lead ("Dissemination and Communication") has been handed over to Jana Macháčová, one of the authors of the publication "Innovation Infrastructures in the Western Balkan Countries". More information on the new team and further developments of the project will be covered in more detail in the coming issue.

AUTHORS

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New Project Focussing on International Co-operation: INCONTACT

As the participation of partners from third countries in the European Research Area has long been disappointing, INCONTACT shall help stimulate co-operation between the National Contact Points.

One of the objectives of FP7 is the participation of excellent researchers from third countries as opening the European Research Area to the rest of the world is part of the "philosophy" of European research co-operation. Access to knowledge and attracting knowledge from abroad, contributing to solve problems of global dimension and competing internationally are the goals of international co-operation within the 7th Framework Programme (FP7). Although a clear objective of the past framework programme, the participation of partners from third countries has always been disappointing. In FP6 a sum of 285 million euro had been earmarked for the inclusion of international partners in European projects, but only roughly 10% of it had been really allocated to third country project partners. Research stakeholders from the EU and associated countries seldom know that counterparts from third countries can participate in projects under the framework programme and obtain EU-funding. The global dimension of the framework programme is not being perceived by the researchers as it would be necessary to have a strong international participation within the research projects. Within the 7th Framework Programme, the international co-operation is organised in a new way. International co-operation has been mainstreamed within the thematic areas of FP7 and "Specific activities of International Co-operation" (SICAs) have been introduced – replacing to some extent the former INCO Programme under FP6. Under the Capacities strand, the activities on international co-operation focus on support and co-operation activities, aiming at setting up common research agendas in cooperation with the main research stakeholder in the third countries (e.g. in the form of INCO-NETs).

The INCO NCPs now have a strong horizontal task in FP7. Bringing together and providing an overview on the variety of INCO activities will be a new challenge for its activities. The INCONTACT project aims exactly at the development of a platform to stimulate closer co-operation among INCO NCPs. Within this framework, INCO NCPs will work together to effect a substantial improvement in the overall quality of NCP services in the field of international co-operation. The positive effect of these efforts will not be limited to the NCP network alone. The international research community will ultimately benefit from the heightened level of service offered by the network. Individual researchers will profit from higher quality services and information, and the establishment of a more consistent level of NCP services across Europe will contribute to greater transparency of the research funding for participants. INCONTACT activities including three awareness and training workshops which will take place in Mexico, Russia and South Africa, exchange of experience, good practice, training for inexperienced European NCPs will strengthen the overall capacity of INCO NCPs and provide for more coherence of the support activities offered. In addition, an Online Encyclopaedia (WIKI-paedia) on International Cooperation compiling all relevant information on international co-operation activities in FP7 will be developed, allowing exchange and interaction between all INCO NCPs.

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Help-forward.gr

▪ <http://www.wbc-inco.net/org/3256.html>

Center for Project Management Successful

In December 2007, a project called "Development of capacities of science and research in higher educational institutions in the Republic of Srpska (RS) for participation in international programmes (Centre for Project Management (CPM))" was started in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The initial objective was to establish project management for an international scientific and technical co-operation that would provide direct support to the sectors of education and science and technology (S&T) in the EU integration process. Furthermore, the CPM's aim was to extend capacities and resources for the participation in international projects related to science, research and higher education. To this end, an office was established in Banja Luka within the Ministry of Science and Technology of the RS. The website <http://www.cpm-rs.info> provides information related to the project's realisation, as well as supportive information on the work of the CPM. The CPM team also organised info-days on FP7 and TEMPUS programmes all over the Republic of Srpska, attended by over 200 participants from more than 54 companies, institutes, and academic and non-academic institutions. The CPM team assisted numerous interested candidates in the registration process at the CORDIS database. Also, the CPM team is having regular everyday contacts with all people interested in participating in EU programmes. They are providing information, advice and assistance in the preparation of applications (mostly for TEMPUS), in finding suitable partners for projects (over CORDIS and individually), and in training for the most important elements of project proposals (including budget preparation, financial rules of FP7, etc). The CPM managed to promote universities in the Republic of Srpska to partners in the EU. Links established through the CPM resulted in new TEMPUS projects and participation in FP7 projects. Moreover, the CPM team assisted two institutions in the preparation of FP7 projects that were approved. Two further projects are waiting for approval. It is expected that the direct benefit of CPM work will exceed 2 million euro within one year. Those positive results signalize the further existence of the CPM after 2008.

LINK *Center for Project Management* ▪ <http://www.wbc-inco.net/org/5565.html>

Serbia: Consultative Bureau for International Projects launched

The Ministry of Science of Serbia opened an office to provide support for preparing proposals for the EU Framework Programme 7 on March 4, 2008, called the Consultative Bureau for International Projects.

The office will work with the NCPs to inform scientists and institutions about details of calls and deadlines as they are announced by the Commission. The bureau will provide advice and guidance to individual Serbian scientists on opportunities within FP7 for funding project ideas and how to put together a successful consortium of partners. It will also provide advice and guidance to scientists during proposal preparation to facilitate as many successful FP7 proposal submissions as possible. Training workshops on good proposal preparation will be organised, together with occasional courses on other relevant topics to meet the specific needs of scientists.

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Director of the Bureau

International Conference for Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Regional Development

The International Conference for Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Regional Development (ICEIRD 2008) will take place in Skopje and Ohrid (FYR of Macedonia) on May 8-11, 2008.

The University "St. Cyril and Methodius" Business Start-up Centre in Skopje, FYR of Macedonia, together with the Computer Science Department from CITY College (an affiliated institution of University of Sheffield) in Thessaloniki, Greece is organising the first International Conference for Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Regional Development ICEIRD 2008. Topics covered at the conference are:

- Governmental and regional policies on entrepreneurship, innovation and R&D
- Clustering and networking
- Entrepreneurship education
- Family businesses and entrepreneurship
- University – industry collaboration
- Innovation policy in small and medium enterprises (SMEs)
- ICT and Regional competitiveness
- Knowledge management and technology transfer
- Regional innovation strategies
- Regional competitiveness and development
- Business process modeling
- The benefit of knowledge zones, business centers and incubators in the region
- Business incubation
- Best practices in the region
- Financing innovation, R&D, SMEs

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LINK ICEIRD Event Website ▪ <http://www.wbc-inco.net/link/5487.html>

Science, Higher Education and Innovation Policy Forum in Montenegro

Another major policy meeting on science, higher education and innovation will take place on July 2-3, 2008, in Montenegro. It is organised by the UNESCO Office in Venice and the Ministry of Education and Science of Montenegro. Commissioner Potočnik will be a key note speaker.

The forum shall bring together some 100 participants, representatives of higher education and scientific institutions as well as academies, parliamentarians responsible for higher education, science and technology, young scientists and representatives of the private sector from the countries of South Eastern Europe. Representatives from other European countries, European and international organisations are invited to participate as well. The forum will take stock of what has been done and what more or better should be done to strengthen in particular the human resources capacity in the region.

Call for Participation: How to Improve Access to Research Information

A workshop discussing insights from Eastern Europe on this topic will be organised within the framework of the 9th International Conference on Current Research Information Systems, June 5-7, 2008, in Maribor, Slovenia.

Sharing research information is one of the crucial issues as far as the implementation of the ERA is concerned. The situation of research information and e-infrastructures in the Eastern European (EE) region is by no means homogeneous. There are countries, which have created new infrastructures such as current research information systems (CRIS) and there are other countries, which are in their planning phase, trying to identify suitable policies, strategies, standards and technologies. This workshop is therefore designed to address questions of availability of information on research activities (i.e. databases including information on research projects, institutions, experts, publications etc.) in EE countries, highlight different approaches, list things still to be desired and foster exchange and network building. To stimulate and structure the discussion the organisers point to the following issues:

- Different solutions in EE in respect to the issue of provision of research information
- Specific problems and difficulties in developing and implementing a CRIS
- Policy approaches in the EE countries
- Possible convergence and cooperation

These issues should be very briefly addressed by the participants (5 min.) in order to leave enough time for discussion during this 90-minute workshop. If you would like to contribute to the workshop with a statement or short presentation, please contact the organisers: agnieszka.wenninger@gesis.org. Please note that the organisers are unfortunately not able to provide reimbursement of travel and accommodation expenses.

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LINK CRIS 2008 9th International Conference on Current Research Information Systems ▪ <http://www.wbc-inco.net/link/5484.html>

International Conference on Culture and External Relations

The Slovenian Presidency is organising a conference in Ljubljana on May 13-14, 2008, to consider how culture can be successfully integrated into the European Union's external relations.

In this context, the interface between arts and science will be addressed as well. A special focus will lie on the Western Balkan countries with respect to arts and science as another means to facilitate the integration into the European Union. At that occasion a special brochure on what is called the third culture will be presented by Commissioner Potočnik.

Conclusions on the Challenge of Brain Circulation

Based on presentations of the status quo of human potential and measures related to brain circulation in the South East European Countries as well as on inputs from experts and discussions, the Round Table organised at the University of Graz on November 24, 2007, led to a set of conclusions and recommendations for immediate and long-term action.

The conclusions and recommendations aim at supporting the creation of a supportive environment and favourable conditions that are sufficiently attractive and promising for young researchers to stay, for the scientific diaspora to co-operate with their home country and maybe return, and for researchers from neighbouring countries and from other European countries to collaborate on a distance, also in the course of shorter and longer research and teaching assignments in SEE. The results of the Round Table shall also feed into the discussions of the Steering Platform.

Suggestions include that the public management and governance of higher education should be professionalised. This could for example be achieved by developing regional twinning programs and summer schools, by establishing regional centres of excellence and attractive satellite infra-



Participants of the Round Table in Graz

structure facilities and by enhancing the co-operation between higher education, research, business and industry. Furthermore, the Web Mob Portal (<http://www.wbc-inco.net/news/2652.html>) and existing information tools and data bases such as e.g. <http://www.westbalkanresearch.net/> should be further promoted and programmes such as the ones run by the World University Service Austria or the Austrian American Foundation should be continued and enlarged.

LINK The full conclusions and the activities which were agreed on for the follow-up are available on <http://www.wbc-inco.net/news/2441.html>

COST DAY in Skopje

"I am extremely glad to be in Skopje again, where in March 2004 I was unanimously elected President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials for the first time" said Professor Francesco Fedi in his address to the numerous audience convened on March 5, 2008, at the University "St. Cyril and Methodius" in Skopje for the Macedonian COST Day.

The COST day was organised by Katerina Sumanovska, representative of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in the COST Committee of Senior Officials, and was opened by Jovan Lazarev, Deputy Minister of Education and Science, Gorgi Martinovski, Rector and Velimir Stojkovski, Vice-Rector of the St. Cyril and Methodius University.

Presentations by the COST Presidency and by the COST Office followed: "COST: Past, Present and Future" by Francesco Fedi, President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials; "COST Actions: Networks of successful European co-operation" by Afonso Fereira, Head of Science Operations of the COST Office; "COST Structure, Instruments and Tools" by Gunter Siegel, Senior Science Officer of the COST Office; "COST Strategy towards neighbouring countries and non-COST countries" and "How to successfully participate in COST" by Wolfgang Obert, Deputy Director of the COST Office.

The COST day was concluded by "COST in Bulgaria" presented by Dijana Peeva and by "Examples of participation in COST Actions" presented by representatives of the local scientific community: Jordan Pop Jordanov, Lidija Krsevska, Gordana Gaceva, Biljana Minceva-Sukarova, Vlatko Ilieski and Goce Vasilevski.

After the COST day a visit to the Institute of Earthquake Engineering and Engineering Seismology took place. The FP6 project "Earthquake protection of Historical Buildings by reversible mixed technologies (PROHITECH)" was illustrated by Kiril Gramatkov and Elena Dumova-Jovanovska.



Franco Fedi, COST CSO President and Wolfgang Obert, Deputy Director COST Office

"I am really impressed by the remarkable participation in COST Actions of the scientific community of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", concluded Professor Fedi "and by the success of the project on Earthquake protection in FP6 originated from a COST Action, which is a very good example of how COST can be an exploratorium of new ideas and of the complementarity of COST and the Framework Programmes".

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Science in the Balkans: A Road to Stability



Over the past two years, the National Authority for Scientific Research (ANCS), through the Romanian Office for Science and Technology in Brussels (ROST), has conducted annual seminars to strengthen European co-operation. This year, reflecting EU enlargement and enhancing co-operation (one of the Slovenian EU Presidency objectives), ANCS convened their annual event on January 17, 2008, with the topic "Stability through Science and Technology – Strengthening EU cooperation in R&D with the Western Balkan Countries".

The idea was to turn this geographical area into an attractive centre for the EU scientific community. To this end, the event investigated ways to support Western Balkan countries (WBCs) in modernising their RDI (Research, Development and Innovation) system and adapting it to European integration requirements.

"We live in a beautiful region with great potential," said Anton Anton, President of the Romanian National Authority for Scientific Research. "And as we have benefitted greatly from the EU pre-accession and training programmes, we feel it is our turn to help our neighbours. Because building peace in the region depends to a great extent on mutual co-operation, for a shared quality of life."

A final report on the event was produced by ScienceBusiness, an independent news and events service for early-stage investment in R&D, across Europe and across industries. The report documents the statements of the discussants at the event, but also provides background information such as insights in the White Paper developed by the SEE-ERA.NET project. The discussions generated a number of approaches to improving science and technology in the region – but the most urgent needs were clear:

- To develop human resources.
- To improve the research infrastructure.
- To reform science and technology policy.
- Financing – to exploit the funds available.
- To raise visibility and awareness.

LINK Report Science in the Balkans – the Road to Stability
▪ <http://www.wbc-inco.net/doc/5298.html>



Science and Technology in the Western Balkans – Reports from the Information Office

This book consists of seven reports compiled by the Information Office of the Steering Platform on Research for the Western Balkan countries at the Centre for Social Innovation, reviewing the condition of Science and Technology in the Western Balkans. Particularities of each country's individual approach to S&T policy making, based on the relevant input and output indicators, are singled out in this publication. The institutional landscape, strategies and laws are discussed as well as the main fields of intervention. Furthermore, opportunities of the respective Western Balkan countries in the process of catching-up with EU Member States in S&T performance are delineated and give an idea of the countries' position on their road to joining the European Research Area. This publication is part of the successful completion of the project "see-science.eu", co-funded by the European Commission under FP6.

AUTHOR Elke Dall ▪ <http://www.wbc-inco.net/users/42.html>

LINK Download the reports from ▪ <http://www.wbc-inco.net/doc/5500.html>

Thematic Report on Science and Technology in Kosovo/UNMIK published

Klaus Schuch, senior researcher at the Centre of Social Innovation, has published a report on the Science and Technology system of Kosovo/UNMIK in the framework of the SEE-SCIENCE.EU project.

The report discusses the political and economic background, analyses the role of relevant institutions such as the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, universities and the Kosovo Academy of Science and Arts, as well as international donors active in the field.

The report is also included in the above mentioned book publication.

AUTHOR Klaus Schuch ▪ <http://www.wbc-inco.net/users/115.html>
ZSI ▪ <http://www.wbc-inco.net/org/29.html>

Imprint

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