

# Proposal for Western Balkan Mobility Programme

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## Concept Note

### Background

Western Balkan R&D Strategy for Innovation identifies research and innovation as two main areas necessary for creation of stable and productively-based society. In order to achieve economic growth and job creation different stakeholders from the academia and business sector must be included. Economic growth can only be based on strong and competitive research with strong emphasis on innovation and technology development. Societies based on knowledge and technology transfer can easily develop additional models and instruments in order to bridge the gap between science and business sector. The key element in creation of stable and sustainable society based on knowledge and new technologies is strong human resources both in research and business sector.

European commission published national reports on all 6 countries in 2015, however precise level for expenditure on research in some countries was difficult to determine due to a lack of reliable statistics.

Report on Serbia estimates that Serbia made progress in improving the framework for science, research and innovation. But in the coming year, Serbia should take actions to modernise organisation of research and innovation in line with the European Research Area and Innovation Union as well as stimulate cooperation between industry and academia and increase level of investment in research.

Even though the investment in R&D in Montenegro did increase in 2014 for 30%, overall investment in R&D remains modest which leads to the limited innovation and research capacity. Montenegro should in incoming years enhance efforts to increase investment in research, in particular through stimulating investment by the private sector.

According to the data available in report on Kosovo\*<sup>1</sup> the investment in research is still below 0.2 % of GDP. Low level of investment in R&D affects the most the quality of research system; the investment itself is insufficient for substantial development of capacity of universities to undertake competitive research. This creates a negative effect on the quality of post-graduate programmes and innovation system as a whole and additionally weakens already fragile link between research and business sector.

The level of investment in research in Albania is around 0.4 % of Albania's GDP which is not sufficient to make a meaningful contribution to competitiveness and growth. The same conclusion is applicable to Bosnia and Herzegovina where the total expenditure on research is around 0.27% of its GDP.

Human capacities in R&D present another challenge for the most countries in the region. According to the data available in European commission reports on Western Balkan countries the number of R&D personnel in percentage of total employment (FTE) ranges between 0.13% and 0.60%. At the same time compliance with the Charter and Code of Conduct for recruitment principles is relatively low. Currently Western Balkan countries are well behind the average of EU 28 in all indicators regarding R&D&I.

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<sup>1</sup> This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

In all WB countries **the need to strengthen the research and innovation capacity** at national level through **increased investment in research both from public and private sector** as well as the **need to strengthen the administrative capacity** to ensure successful participation in different programmes (bilateral R&D programmes, COST, Erasmus+, and other) is necessary precondition.

**European commission's common recommendations for all six countries in the region are therefore:**

- **Increase investments in research and innovation (public and private)**
- **Strengthen research and innovation capacity**
- **Increase participation in European Research Area**
- **Modernise organisation of R&D&I in line with ERA and IU**
- **Stimulate the cooperation between industry and academia.**

Given the pre-accession status of Western Balkan countries, strengthening cooperation in research and innovation would also facilitate the integration of the WB into the European Research Area. **Highly educated Diaspora networks can serve as hubs for knowledge and expertise transfer and dissemination, opening at the same time new cooperation opportunities for European institutions in the Balkans.**

## **Rationale**

In order to increase visibility of researchers from Western Balkan region in ERA **mobility and circulations of researchers should be stimulated.** Taking into account the proportion of investment in R&D in the WB region it is less likely to be expected that researchers from the region will be equally successful in highly competitive mobility programmes as ones from better performing regions. In 2013 under the FP7 European Commission launched ERA chair sub programmes in attempt to stimulate knowledge circulation from developed to less developed regions in European research area. The aim of the ERA chair programme is to create more equal opportunities for institutions from less developed regions and to attract top academics so that they can compete with centres of excellence elsewhere in the European Research Area (ERA).

This aim is fully aligned with the goals of Cohesion policy of European Union - provide help to less developed European countries and regions in order to create more equal opportunities. Important tool in the implementation of this policy are among others cohesion and structural funds complemented with specially designed programmes focused on specific areas. In order to achieve more stability and socio-economic balance between the regions special programmes targeting these regions should be developed.

**Based on the positive experience with ERA chair where researchers from developed regions were placed and employed in institutions with the mission of developing competitive research teams, similar mobility programmes with the aim of peer learning and team formation should be created for Western Balkan countries.**

## Three mobility schemes suggested

*First mobility scheme* will be focused on forming the **international research teams** which will include from **min. three to max. fifteen researchers from one or more Western Balkan countries and at least one researcher from any European country who will act as a team leader and advise, mentor and ensure support to the formed research team** thus connecting outstanding researchers from the region and strengthening the overall quality of the research systems in Western Balkan countries.

**The aim of this scheme is to set up or improve international joint projects the result of which could increase innovation potential of the Region with special emphasis on transfer of knowledge between academia and business sector.** Research projects should be focused on research areas of special importance for the future development of the region. The emphasis could be put for example on sustainable development, clean energy and water and waste management.

Duration of the scheme **is 24 months**. During that period research teams will be awarded with the grant which will cover the research costs, living allowance and travel and mobility costs.

*Second mobility scheme* will be focused on **individual researchers from EU member state working in the Region of Western Balkan forming their research team with the scientist from the WB region**. The aim of the scheme is to connect the aforementioned researchers from EU member state with researchers from WB countries thus creating international networks of researchers and contributing to the creation of more equal opportunities for the researchers from different EU regions.

Duration of the scheme **is 24 months**. During that period research teams will be awarded with the grant which will cover the research costs, living allowance and travel and mobility costs.

*Third mobility scheme* will be focused on giving the **individual researcher** from Western Balkan region the opportunity to work in international surrounding in one of the institution in European country. Duration of the scheme is 12 months with **mandatory return phase to at least one of the countries in the region** in duration of 12 months.

Applicants must be the outstanding researchers from the Region who want to initiate and establish cooperation with an outstanding researcher from EU member state.

Researcher has to be recruited under the employment contract or other direct contract with equivalent benefits.

Prerequisite for application to this scheme is firm guarantee of the future cooperation between researcher from the Region and his/her mentor from the European country. Both researchers should have previous experience as research project manager and should demonstrate the ability to lead a research team.

## Objectives and target group

*Target group* Western Balkan mobility programme is developed for researchers who have a potential to become future leaders in their research communities, who are focused on sharing knowledge in international surrounding and are willing to work in competitive research environments.

**Long Term Objective** is to create better research environment in the Western Balkan region (Albania, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo\*, Montenegro, Serbia) with stimulating effect on brain circulation and quality of research system.

### Specific objectives of the programme

- Create the necessary boost to improve the quality of research and create better conditions for research excellence;
- Improve the cooperation between the researchers in the Region and create better conditions for integration into the European research area;
- Support the scientific diaspora and enable better circulation of knowledge between research diaspora and researchers from Western Balkan countries;
- Increase the mobility of researchers in the Western Balkan region with special emphasis on young researchers and researchers with career brake in order to create better surrounding for the development of their research careers;
- Stimulate human capacity building in the research organisations in Western Balkan countries.

### Budget

**In total around €35 mil till 2020 (concerning the n+3 rule, end year would be 2023).**

Financial contribution should be calculated on the basis of unit costs used in H2020 programmes and it could be topped up by the host organisation if necessary.

Minimal monthly budget for the researcher cannot be below 3675 euro. Average cost per researcher per year could be from 44.100 € up to 88.200 € plus from 150,000 to 300,000 € in total for research equipment and material

Around 80 fellowships could be awarded out of the total budget of 20 million euro, around 10 research teams formed out of 15 million euros.

### Indicators and outputs

#### *First mobility scheme*

- up to 10 research teams formed
- up to 200 researchers included in the international networks
- strategy of management and protection of IPR drafted
- research equipment required
- number of cooperation with business sector, SME, local developmental agencies, business incubators, technology parks
- number of research papers published in international, peer-reviewed journals, etc.
- number of training and dissemination activities

#### *Second mobility scheme*

- up to 60 fellowships awarded
- project proposal submitted to nationally and EU funded programmes
- strategy of management and protection of IPR drafted

- number of cooperation with business sector, SME, local developmental agencies, business incubators, technology parks
- number of formed research teams
- number of research papers published in international, peer-reviewed journals etc.
- number of training and dissemination activities

### *Third mobility scheme*

- up to 20 fellowships awarded
- project proposal submitted to nationally and EU funded programmes
- number of IPRs
- number of cooperation with business sector, SME, local developmental agencies, business incubators, technology parks
- number of research papers published in international, peer-reviewed journals etc.
- number of training and dissemination activities

### **Monitoring**

Semi-annual reports on activities to the managing authority.

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