

WESTERN BALKANS RESEARCH FOUNDATION

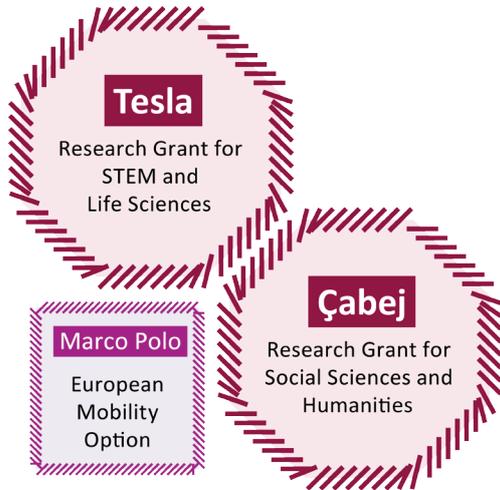
1. At the Paris Western Balkans Summit of 4 July 2016, the Heads of State and Government formulated the following request¹ to the Joint Science Conference of the Western Balkans Process / Berlin Process: “[...] to propose [by summer 2017] funding mechanisms for excellent young researchers from the Balkans, allowing them to gain experience abroad and to create their own laboratories of excellence.” Subsequently, an international Expert Group has been appointed, which through an intensive process has developed a comprehensive blueprint for a new **Western Balkans Research Foundation** (hereafter called Foundation). The blueprint was consensually adopted at the 3rd Joint Science Conference held in June 2017, in Paris.
2. The Foundation is designed to enable outstanding junior scientists from the Balkans and from Europe² **to build up excellent research labs and teams in the Balkan countries³ within a period of five years through *ad personam* grants**, enjoying grant portability. The grants will allow a preceding one to two-year training period in top research teams or labs in Europe, thus enhancing scientific links between the Western Balkans and the European Union. Grant agreements between the Foundation, the grantee and the host institutions (in the WB and the EU) will safeguard autonomy of operations. These grants are a central **measure of brain gain** aimed at the Balkans.
3. As further instruments for **brain circulation and transfer of excellence**, 3 optional add-on actions will support:
 - a. the establishment of research networks within the Balkans,
 - b. the outreach of scientific findings in society and
 - c. innovation and technology transfer into economy and society.
4. Through the Foundation’s grants, a critical mass of excellent researcher teams in the Balkans will be shaped progressively. These teams will form a driving force of change: by participating in these “**hives**” of excellence, the national education and science systems will profit from sustainable improvement, hence aiding their efforts to keep on the European track or setting the course for it. Science today knows no national divisions and requires cross-border networking.
5. In the global competition for the greatest minds, the Foundation should attract the best of the best, **paying particular attention to junior scientists from the Balkans**. Participation is open to all scientific fields. Criteria are clearly defined: junior scientists (max. 45 years of age), PhD certificate in hand and publicised PhD thesis. The quality of applicants and research projects are evaluated in a two-stage process with a final interview.
6. The Foundation will be set-up as a **self-governing international institution. Italy is willing to host the Foundation in Trieste**. The Foundation should be carried by the countries involved in the Western Balkans Process and the EU member states; at a later stage, other interested countries such as Switzerland or Norway could join. A financial contribution from the European Commission and a cooperation agreement with the European Research Council as well as further collaboration with public and private donors are highly desirable and expected.
7. The management of the Foundation and its operational routines will **strictly follow international standards** in order to safeguard credibility and reputation. The administration will be as lean and efficient as possible. The recruitment of the Scientific Council and the administrative staff needs to take place exclusively according to quality criteria and must be publicised internationally. The grantees and the research performance will be at the core of the Foundation’s work.

¹ See the Final Declaration of the Paris Western Balkans Summit of 4 July 2016.

² If meaningful, applicants from other countries with ties to the Balkans may be accepted.

³ Republic of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Croatia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo*, Montenegro, Republic of Serbia, Republic of Slovenia. (*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSC 1244 resolution and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.)

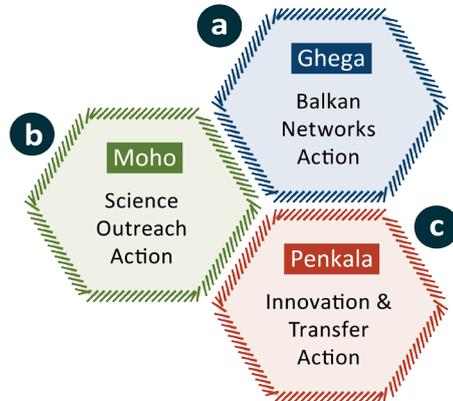
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1 Grants

- ↳ Establishment of own excellence team or lab, as a principal investigator (*ad personam* grant)
- ↳ **5 years** investigation-driven research
- ↳ **1-2 years** optional preceding training in the EU
- ↳ Grant amount = 750,000 EUR

FUNDING INSTRUMENTS



2 Add-ons

- ↳ 3 optional actions as add-ons to the Tesla and Çabej Grants
- ↳ Amount per grant ≥ 12,500 EUR

ORGANISATION

- ↳ Status of a self-governing international organisation
- ↳ Carried by the 13 countries of the Western Balkans Process with the support of the European Union
- ↳ Located potentially in Trieste, Italy

Steering Council

Scientific Council + State envoys (1/state & EC) + Other donors or trustees (optional) + College of Auditors
 Scientific council has >50% seats Convenes at least once a year

Co-Chair: Foundation President + 1 state envoy

Board: Foundation President + Vice-President + Director-General + 1 state envoy Convenes regularly

Scientific Council

Evaluators / Panel (≥19) 3-4 Subpanels according to major disciplines
 Evaluates the applications (2 stage-process with final interview) Convenes as often as necessary

Chair: Foundation President + Vice-President (at least one woman)

Executive Agency

Grantees

Grant Agreement between foundation, grantee and host institution (tailored approach)
Grant Assistance Scheme (individual, flexible) Grant evaluation & monitoring (ongoing)