

FINAL

Conclusions of meeting of Steering Platform on Research for

Western Balkan Countries

Ohrid, 26 May 2011

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

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

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

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

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

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

On the future Common Strategic Framework (CSF), the Platform took note of the Consultation Process on the Green Paper and the Follow-up.

The interest was expressed to be present at the Stakeholder Conference on June 10, 2011 in Brussels. The Platform welcomed the contribution on behalf of all enlargement countries as presented by Tubitak.

Several members offered to pursue the discussion in particular on the type of capacity building required and on the balance between small and larger research projects.

With respect to synergy between R&I funding and the Pre-Accession Instrument (IPA), the beneficiary countries were encouraged to deploy more IPA for research capacity building under all components.

The Platform asked that the post-2013 IPA would support more clearly the EU 2020 priorities and in particular support for building the Innovation Union and competitiveness in general.

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

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

The Platform welcomed the presentation from RCC and the Worldbank outlining the preliminary ideas on how to implement the project “Regional Strategy on Research and Development for Innovation for Western Balkans” on the basis of the Joint Statement of the Ministerial Conference held in April 2009 in Sarajevo.

The need to mobilize knowledge and create more leverage was underlined building upon work that has been done so far in particular in the WBC-INCO.NET project and input from beneficiary countries.

The Platform welcomed the presentation made on survey on the research and innovation agenda in the region presented by the Institute of Economics in Zagreb. In this context, the importance of retrieving statistics, data and indicators was underlined. The Platform also welcomed the opportunity and ideas presented to enhance innovation.

The Platform took note of the progress made on the innovation support work package in the WBC-INCO.NET. Mapping of innovation infrastructures was considered a useful exercise to build upon innovation capacity.

Information on the next meeting will be announced in due time. An invitation has been expressed by Bosnia and Herzegovina to hold it in Sarajevo.