



## Editorial

Dear readers,  
...

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## Imprint

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## Strategic approaches to fostering the inte- gration of the West- ern Balkan countries into the European Research Area

### The White Paper - Summary of Recommendations

#### Preamble

*Aiming at the integration of EU member states and Southeast European countries into the European Research Area by linking research activities within existing national, bilateral and regional RTD programmes the Southeast European Era-Net (SEE-ERA.NET) is a networking project, financed by the European Commission and managed by a consortium of 17 ministries and funding bodies from 14 European countries.*

*By offering strategic recommendations and concrete implementation scenarios for further activities of the SEE-ERA.NET consortium together with other major stake-holders throughout Europe, the currently prepared White paper, accompanied by a Joint Action Plan, contributes to foster the integration process by developing S&T capacities of the Western Balkan Countries and by strengthening S&T cooperation within the region as well as between the Western Balkan countries and the EU Member States. The White Paper proposes concrete joint action through the setting up of a Regional RTD Programme, building on the experience and the monitoring results of SEE-ERA-NET's successful Pilot Joint Call (PJC) as a first pilot case of a joint regional call for joint research proposals.*

#### Summary of Recommendations

*The ongoing process of economic, social and political integration of the Western Balkan countries into the European Union fosters the political stability, growth and prosperity in the region and throughout Europe. R&D is considered an important prerequisite and a facilitator of social and economic development and trans-national cohesion; it is thus a crucial supporting element in the transition of the Western Balkan countries to knowledge-based economies. Furthermore, the*

*significant R&D potential of the region in terms of excellent scientists and internationally acknowledged institutions - especially in the light of particular contributions of the Western Balkan countries the European Research Area - should not be neglected. Policy should aim at a coherence between all activities.*

*In order to strengthen the scientific and innovative potential of the Western Balkan countries, to address their strategic economic and social needs and to improve the context of cooperation between the scientific communities all over Europe, a number of specific objectives and implementation scenarios are proposed:*

1. For the Western Balkan countries it is highly recommended that S&T be considered one of the core priorities to assure economic growth and social prosperity while also addressing the European Lisbon goal. This priority should be reflected in national policy making. Here, core objectives are a modern S&T infrastructure, attractive career opportunities and a stimulating environment for activating the full potential of Europe-wide and international S&T cooperation. To increase international competitiveness, the reform of the higher education institutions should be fostered and a systematic evaluation of science institutions as well as the introduction of competitive national S&T funding schemes should be envisaged. Special attention should be given to making the best use of the potential of women in science and research. Researchers should find a stimulating environment to build their own innovative business. With regard to the Barcelona target apart from public Research and Development (R&D) spending, private investments in R&D should be encouraged through an integrated Research and Technological Development and Innovation (RTDI) policy. To stimulate the engagement of the local industry in innovative activities and research, a policy mix should particularly strive to assure the compatibility of S&T policy with economic, fiscal, labour market, regional and foreign policies. Attention should be given to the management of intellectual property. In order to get to the full participation in the EU 7th Framework Programme, the Western Balkan countries, both individually and on a regional basis, should raise the profile of their academic skills and growing R&D capacities in the EU Member States, in terms of excellent scientists and internationally acknowledged institutions. The establishment of a National Service Agency to promote and support international relations is recommended for each of the countries as a way of fostering international contacts and partnerships. National Service Agencies would be expected to play a leading role in the international promotion of RTDI in the Western Balkan countries, attracting direct foreign R&D investment to the region. Regional networking will be of importance in meeting the growing needs of increased trans-disciplinary research and will help to increase the visibility and critical mass of

S&T institutions. In terms of addressing common regional priorities, a regional policy dialogue and regional programmes and S&T infrastructures should be envisaged.

2. Building on the ground prepared by the Western Balkan countries, both the countries of the region and the EU Member States and Accession countries stand to benefit from a number of opportunities, given closer co-operation based on existing governmental agreements and implemented through a variety of national, bilateral and EU programmes. Core elements of such cooperation are bi- and multilateral policy dialogues facilitating mutual learning and the transfer of relevant experiences as well as a whole set of joint measures for increasing individual mobility, networking and cooperation among scientific institutions and innovative companies. The joint exploitation of scientific results should also be envisaged. The integration of innovative small and medium enterprises into bilateral collaborative research schemes should be considered. Bilateral cooperation should also cover contributions to institution and capacity building in the reform processes in the Western Balkan countries, including the offer of experience and assistance. In concrete terms, this would mean combining post-graduate science management courses at higher education institutions in the Member States with the relevant fellowship programmes; exploring the possibility of twinning models between institutions in the EU Member States and Western Balkan countries; and facilitating staff exchanges for the national science administration or National Contact Points for EU programmes. Building on common objectives and interests, the activities and relevant bilateral programmes of the EU Member States should be coordinated to use synergies. In this context, European schemes like ERA-NETs or INCO-NETs and the level of dialogue achieved within the scope of the Stability Pact for South East Europe and its successor initiatives ("Regional Council") provide a basis for coordinating activities among the Member States and with the Western Balkan countries.
3. Another priority for joint action should be given to making use of the full potential that the Seventh EU Framework Programme on Research, Technological Development and Demonstration activities (FP7) offers for cooperation with the Western Balkan countries, either on the basis of an Association Agreement or, in the absence of such an Agreement, as so-called "third countries". A major prerequisite to this process is the development of National Contact Points (NCP) in the Western Balkan countries; these should be strengthened and linked to the established NCP networks among the EU Member States and Associated Countries. There are manifold opportunities to support international S&T co-operations within FP7, the 7th EU Framework Programme on Research, Technological Development and Demonstration Activities. As well as participating jointly in the call for proposals, teams from the EU Member States and the Western Balkan countries will be addressed in a targeted way through Specific International Cooperation Activities (SICAs), which address subjects of particular common interest by engaging with the strengths and needs of the Western



Balkan countries. Further coordination activities on offer include: an International Cooperation Network (INCO-NET) for facilitating bi-regional dialogue and improving the participation of the Western Balkan countries in the 7th EU Framework Programme on Research, Technological Development and Demonstration Activities; the European Research Area Network (ERA-NET (plus) etc.), which facilitates the setting up of joint S&T funding programmes in the EU Member States and the Western Balkan countries; and, last but not least, the several horizontal actions in favour of R&D in Small and Medium-Size enterprises, of innovation activities, of regional cooperation and for linking S&T infrastructure in order to foster cooperative research. *Other Community Programmes such as the Instruments of Pre-accession Assistance (IPA), the Life Long Learning Programme (LLL) and the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP) should also be considered as part of the context of opportunity for S&T capacity building, human potential development and the development of innovative research structures. In addition optimal use has to be made of the opportunities of the Instruments of Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) for S&T institution and capacity building and human potential development in the Western Balkan countries. CREST is currently implementing mutual learning exercises addressed to a variety of relevant topics in order to enhance the RTDI policy performance of the Member States/Associated States. The Western Balkan countries could gain valuable experience by joining these discussions as observers. Further-more, the coherence of policy approaches throughout Europe is to be ensured as a prerequisite of the growing European Research Area. Therefore the Western Balkan countries should be invited on observer status to join the "Open Method of Coordination" of the EU Member States and Associate States via the CREST working groups.*

4. In order to facilitate S&T policy-related dialogue between the Western Balkan countries, the EU Member States, and additional countries associated with the EU Framework Programme for RTD and the European Commission, a Steering Platform on Research for the Western Balkan countries was launched in 2006. This dialogue platform is expected to play a central role in stimulating, monitoring, and supporting policy development in the Western Balkan countries and S&T cooperation throughout Europe. From 2008 on, it is envisaged that the Platform will be supported by an INCO-NET consortium which will provide analytical and practical support for knowledge-based dialogue with a view to implementing a number of joint activities to foster cooperation throughout Europe.
5. The integrative role of the Southeast European ERA.NET (SEE-ERA.NET) in establishing a sustainable network of policy makers and funding bodies from EU Member States, Western Balkan countries and other associated countries makes the SEE-ERA network project consortium an important player in the region, strongly positioned as a facilitator of joint S&T related activities. The future-oriented approaches of the SEE-ERA.NET consortium are described in the appended Joint Action Plan, which is considered an integral part of the present White Paper. Building on the analytical work of

SEE-ERA.NET and on the implementation of the "Pilot Joint Call", and in view of the proposed "Regional Programme", all interested stakeholders are invited to use the knowledge and experience of the project consortium and to complement or indeed participate in the future activities of SEE-ERA.NET

*Drawing on the experience of the SEE-ERA.NET partners and the analytical results of the project, SEE-ERA.NET can offer the EU Commission essential strategic input for the development of future work programmes (7th Framework Programme, CIP Programme etc.) and for future annual indicative programmes (IPA). The present White Paper already provides a number of recommendations that could form the basis for in-depth dialogue with the EU Commission.*

*It is recommended that the present White Paper and other past and future deliverables of SEE-ERA.NET be considered in the strategic dialogue to be established through the Steering Platform on Research for the Western Balkan countries. Along these lines, the forthcoming European INCO-NET is invited to build its activities on the results and experiences of SEE-ERA.NET as far as cooperation with the Western Balkan countries is concerned. The future activities of both projects should be coordinated in such a way as to assure full coherence and complementarity.*

## Regional Programme for Cooperation with South-East Europe (ReP-SEE)

### The core element of the Joint Action Plan

#### Preamble

Aiming at the integration of EU member states and Southeast European countries into the European Research Area by linking research activities within existing national, bilateral and regional RTD programmes, the Southeast European Era-Net (SEE-ERA.NET) is a networking project, financed by the European Commission and managed by a consortium of 17 ministries and funding bodies from 14 European countries.

#### The Regional Programme (ReP-SEE)

Building on the experiences of SEE-ERA.NET's successful Pilot Joint Call (PJC) as a first pilot case of a joint regional call for joint research proposals, the SEE-ERA.NET consortium proposes to set-up a Regional Programme for Cooperation with South-East Europe (ReP-SEE) inviting interested stakeholders from EU-Member States, Associated States and the Western Balkan Countries to join.

#### Objectives and Target Groups

The Regional Programme intends to provide a unique instrument and new momentum for enhanced S&T cooperation with the Western Bal-



kan countries. This includes networking activities facilitating active participation of Western Balkan institutions in project consortia participating in European programmes and other major multilateral initiatives like EUREKA and COST - taking into account the strengths of the Western Balkan countries. The joint utilisation of large-scale infrastructure in the growing European Research Area will also be supported.

Additional measures are envisaged with regard to the two other elements of the "Innovation triangle", education and innovation, both considered to be major assets for economic growth and prosperity. The aim is to create a favourable environment for young scientists at Western Balkan S&T institutions and to integrate recently developed innovation structures located in the Western Balkan countries into innovation networks and clusters in the EU Member States.

The various measures proposed here are addressed to public and private S&T institutions, innovation structures and individual young scientists situated in the participating countries from all over Europe. Innovative SMEs are especially encouraged to participate in this programme.

### The four Pillars

ReP-SEE will consist of four key elements:

- First pillar: Joint Call for European research projects
- Second pillar: Accompanying Measures in order to facilitate joint research
- Third pillar: Young scientist Programme to foster the individual mobility of young scientists - men and women - between their home institutions and host institutions in the Western Balkan countries
- Fourth pillar: Innovation Programme with the aim of linking SMEs, technology/innovation centres and other innovation structures in the Western Balkan countries to existing thematic innovation networks/clusters in the EU partner countries.

### The first pillar:

Within the Joint Call for European research projects it is intended to

1. fund "Collaborative Research Projects"
2. offer "Preparatory Grants" for collaborative research projects
3. offer "Docking Grants" for collaborative research projects.

To 1: Funding criteria for "Collaborative Research Projects" will correspond with the thematic areas of the 7th EU Framework Programme on Research and Technological Development and Demonstration activities in such a way as to foster scientific excellence and enhance cooperation with the Western Balkan countries. The further strengthening of the regional research area in South-East Europe should be achieved by a minimum participation of two institutions from Western Balkan countries in each project. The "Collaborative Research Projects" are expected to have a duration of at least two years and to include a substantial scientific contribution from each partner institution. The concrete deliverables include an utilisation plan for the results.

Eligible costs include travel, additional personnel including guest scientists, consumables and small equipment (including leasing). Sub-contracts for R&D services are permitted.

To 2: Aimed at the preparation phase of a project concept/proposal, the "Preparatory Grants" for collaborative research projects are subject to criteria similar to those of the "Collaborative Research Projects". Here, the duration is much shorter (maximum one year). Specific activities to enable more intense networking will be funded. Eligible costs include travel, workshops/conferences, additional personnel and consumables for feasibility studies.

To 3: "Docking Grants" for collaborative research projects aim at the integration of institutions from Western Balkan countries into already running projects (supported by the EU Framework Programme, EUREKA, COST, etc.). The duration is limited to a maximum of one year. Eligible costs include travel, additional personnel and consumables for preparatory studies.

The second pillar: Accompanying Measures, an integral part of the ReP-SEE, aim at preparing the ground for Joint RTD, especially through small scale activities facilitating or supporting capacity and institution building, policy development and regional development.

Examples of possible Accompanying Measures could be:

- the development of a standard methodology and of implementation scenarios for introducing a systematic evaluation and benchmarking at project, programme and institutional level in the Western Balkan countries
- trainee programmes for science managers from the Western Balkan countries in experienced European research institutions, science organisations and public S&T administrations.

The third pillar: One objective of the Young Scientist Programme is to foster individual mobility of excellent young scientists - women and men - from home institutions in the Western Balkan countries (outward) or to host institutions in the Western Balkan countries (inward).

With reference to outward mobility, it is essential that the young scientists remain in contact with their home institutions, while building bridges to S&T institutions in EU Member States. There are two options:

- Young scientists may be employed by institutions in the Western Balkan countries to implement S&T projects at the cutting edge of science for a three-year period in close cooperation with a host institution in an EU Member State. Short and medium term working periods in the host institution will be funded through the fellowship scheme.
- Young scientists from the Western Balkan countries may proceed with their scientific career in a host institution in an EU Member State for a two-year period, including an additional two-year return period in a home institution in a Western Balkan Country. For the entire four-year period, a (return) fellowship will be offered.

With reference to inward mobility, special emphasis will be given to attracting young scientists from EU Member States to work in leading



S&T institutions in the Western Balkan countries. Complementing the European Marie Curie funding scheme, exploratory grants for short and medium term studies of up to 6 months will be offered.

The fourth pillar: The Innovation Programme aims at linking recently or newly established innovation structures in the Western Balkan countries, including innovative SMEs, technology and innovation centres and incubators, to existing thematic innovation networks/clusters in the EU partner countries. Funding should be offered for exploratory and partnering activities between interested institutions in the Western Balkan countries and their potential partner networks/clusters in the EU and for the building of mutual communication and cooperation structures.

To attract the interest of funding institutions or other donors to such a programme, a preparatory phase should be devoted to promoting the innovative potential of the Western Balkan countries, based on a mapping of existing innovation structures. Stakeholders from regional administrations and municipalities from the Western Balkan countries and EU Member States should be invited to contribute to the establishment of the Innovation Programme.

### **Administration of the Regional Programme**

For the administration of Joint Calls for S&T project proposals, a (new) Central Administrative Body is to be contracted, fulfilling the following main tasks:

- Management of the call for proposals, including a hotline for applicants
- Organisation of the peer-review and preparation of the funding decision
- Contractual matters, e.g. coordination of decentralised project contracting (of a virtual common pot); implementation and monitoring of the real common pot contracts
- Financial administration and control of the programme budget, based on a centralised common pot (the juste retour principle will be respected for project funding except in the case of the accompanying measures)
- Reporting to the financing and donating institutions

In addition and in order to make best use of synergies, the Central Administrative Body might implement the Young Scientist Programme and the Innovation Programme and could also act as a Central Information Facility for cooperation between the EU and the Western Balkan countries.

### **Implementation Scenario and Time Table:**

The ReP-SEE concept is proposed by the SEE-ERA.NET consortium to interested stakeholders from the EU-Member States, Associated States and Western Balkan Countries.

For the time being the implementation is considered through:

- the ongoing activities of SEE-ERA.NET until August 2009
- an ERA-NET Plus proposal to be submitted to the EU Commission by February 2008 with a possible implementation starting in Fall







## The SEE-ERA.NET White Paper in a nutshell

- The WHITE PAPER offers strategic recommendations and concrete implementation scenarios for connecting the research systems of Southeast Europe to the European Research Area
- The WHITE PAPER identifies opportunities for developing S&T policy strategies, fostering of institutional reforms, institution building and infrastructure development in the Western Balkan countries
- The WHITE PAPER presents scenarios for improving human capacity building and international mobility and provides advice for fostering of the innovation potential in the Western Balkan countries through academia-industry relationships
- The WHITE PAPER indicates how the Western Balkan countries can use the full potential of the EU Framework Programmes on Research and Technological Development by recommending new mechanisms to allow the docking of Western Balkans institutions to established European consortia
- The WHITE PAPER is accompanied by a Joint Action Plan which includes concrete implementation scenarios in the Regional Programme for Cooperation with South-East Europe (accessible online at <http://www.see-era.net/attach/JAP090707doc.doc>.)
- The WHITE PAPER is presented by the Southeast European Era-Net (SEE-ERA.NET), a networking project, financed by the European Commission and managed by a consortium of 17 ministries and funding bodies from 14 European countries (including all Western Balkan countries) and is published in the well-known scientific journal Transition Studies Review (TSR), Springer Wien

## The Regional Programme for Cooperation with South-East Europe (ReP-SEE) in a nutshell

- ReP-SEE is a new and unique instrument for enhanced regional S&T cooperation, which connects the Western Balkan countries to the European Research Area
- ReP-SEE consists of the four pillars "Joint Calls for European research projects", "Accompanying Measures" in order to facilitate joint research, the "Young scientist Programme "(mobility) and the "Innovation Programme"
- ReP-SEE is designed on the basis of SEE.ERA.NET's white paper and builds on the experience of SEE.ERA.NET's successful Pilot Joint Call for Research Proposals (PJC)
- ReP-SEE is open to the Western Balkan Countries, Associated States and interested stakeholders from EU-Member States
- ReP-SEE provides funding for public and private S&T institutions, innovation structures and individual young scientists situated in the participating countries from all over Europe. Innovative SMEs are especially encouraged to participate in this programme
- ReP-SEE was developed by the Southeast European Era-Net (SEE-ERA.NET), a networking project financed by the European Commission and managed by a consortium of 17 ministries and funding bodies from 14 European countries (including all Western Balkan countries)

## Praise for the White Paper:

**minister rohan, Croatia: fantastic, this white paper**

**agolli, ministerial aide, Albania: the best thing to happen since sliced bread**

**Minister of Science, Hadschic, Bosnia: "A fascinating read, the "Lord of the Rings" of the 20th century**

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