

## ***The Southeast European (SEE) ERA.NET project***

### **What is SEE-ERA.NET?**

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 (Austria, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Germany, Greece, Hungary, FYR of Macedonia, Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia). Turkey, Cyprus and Switzerland are interested to join.

SEE-ERA.NET is a long term project of 4 years duration and will develop scenarios for a sustainable cooperation beyond 2009.

### **SEE-ERA.NET's objectives:**

- integrating Southeast Europe into the European Research Area
- adding value to existing bilateral S&T agreements
- improving interregional research cooperation
- contributing to the "EU-Balkan countries Action Plan in S&T", adopted at EU Ministerial Conference in Thessaloniki in 2003.

### **Current state of the SEE-ERA.NET project:**

During the period 2006/2007 took place SEE-ERA.NET Pilot Joint Call for Research Proposals (PJC):

- Launching of the Call: November 30, 2006 – March 31, 2007
- Evaluation of applications : April 01, 2007- June 15, 2007
- Contracting of the selected projects: August 01, 2007 – September 30, 2007
- Monitoring of the running projects: September 01, 2007- June 30, 2008

The design of the call was based on the priorities and needs of the Western Balkan countries (Environment, Information and Communication Technologies, Food, Agriculture and Biotechnology).

345 proposals were submitted and as a result, 321 proposals involving 1437 teams were declared eligible and submitted for evaluation, of which 1420 teams are from SEE ERA-NET partner countries, of which 681 are from European Union (EU) and 739 from West Balkan Countries (WBC). 17 teams from European countries not partners of the SEE- ERA.NET were involved.

The overall budget of this call was 830.000 Euros and the indicative budget per project was 20.000 euros for a period of maximum 9 months. The national contribution was based on "just retour" principal.

## The White Paper

- offers strategic recommendations and concrete implementation scenarios for connecting the research systems of Southeast Europe to the European Research Area
- identifies opportunities for developing S&T policy strategies, fostering of institutional reforms, institution building and infrastructure development in the Western Balkan countries
- 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.
- 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
- 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>.)
- is published in the well-known scientific journal *Transition Studies Review (TSR)*, Springer Wien.

## The Regional Programme (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
- consists of the four pillars “Joint Calls for European research projects”, “Accompanying Measures” in order to facilitate joint research, as well as “Young scientist / mobility” and “Innovation”
- 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
- is open to the Western Balkan Countries, Associated States and interested stakeholders from EU-Member States
- 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

### **SEE-ERA.NET's future developments:**

At the end of September - beginning of October 2007 took place the 2<sup>nd</sup> Balkan Mission. There were organised meetings with high representatives from ministries of Science and Education and from Innovation sector from West Balkan Countries.

The main objective was to promote the ReP-SEE and White Paper and to receive the confirmations for joining the SEE-ERA.NET Plus project proposal, September 2008 - August 2012.

All the SEE-ERA.NET partners, together with the interested programme owners, agencies, ministries and other stakeholders in and outside the SEE-ERA.NET consortium shall contribute with the minimum financial volume of the joint call: 2 Mio (+1 Mio from the EC).

This amount of money will give the opportunity to finance research projects up to 150.000 euros/project. The number of financed projects will be proportionally with each of the partner countries national contribution.

On 11-12, December 2007 will take place in Austria the meeting on ReP-SEE, including the Mobility and Innovation Pillars after discussion on the outcomes of the SEE-ERA.NET Conference in Thessaloniki - "International conference on the integration of SMEs into the SEE-ERA-NET activities" (29 November 2007) organised by the WP5 leader, Greece.