

PRESENTATION OF BAFN “BALKAN AGRO FOOD NETWORK”

Background and overview

Several initiatives are being implemented to facilitate the access to EU research programmes for researchers from the Western Balkan Countries (WBC). In 2003, a “*EU-Balkan Countries Action plan in Science and Technology*” has been adopted. This action plan has identified four initiatives to be promoted (“support to research infrastructures”, “improvement of the human potential”, “institutional building” and “promotion of joint research activities”) and five scientific fields of intervention (“Information and Communication Technologies”, “Energy”, “Environment”, “Agriculture” and “Cultural Heritage”).

The project Balkan Agro Food Network (BAFN) intends to contribute to these efforts in the area of agricultural and food research.

BAFN is a project supported by the European Commission under the sixth Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP6). The project started on 1st May 2006 and will run for two years, ending in April 2008. The project gathers partners from Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia Montenegro and FYROM¹. Organisations from Bulgaria, Hungary and Greece with good knowledge of European research programmes also participate to the project. The project is coordinated by Euroquality, a consulting company established in Paris.

Major outputs of the project

- A database of research groups, researchers and industry
The database is a tool intended to foster the building of research networks between scientists from the WBC and scientists from the EU. It is designed to help researcher and organisations initiate cooperation with others, and to identify scientists or organisations with specific competencies. This database will be available on-line at www.bafn.eu
- A mapping report
A mapping report, identifying the research potential in the field of agricultural and food research will be delivered in 2007. The report will include data on the organisations (type of organisation, average size, production and productivity) and on the scientists (level and sector of education, age, gender etc.). The report, which will utilise the results of a survey, will also identify the main players in agricultural and food research in each country covered by the project.

¹ Croatia is not covered by the project as the country is already involved in a complementary project (EU AGRI MAPPING).

- Recommendations on research areas and support instruments

A recommendation report, identifying future support policies and priority research areas will be delivered in 2008. The report will include a list of the main scientific fields considered as the priority areas for agricultural and food research in each country. It will also include a description of supports mechanisms that could contribute to answer specific problems of research organisations from the WBC. The report will be a contribution to the implementation of the “*EU-Balkan Countries Action plan in Science and Technology*” in the agricultural and food sector.

The objectives of BAFN will be achieved thanks to the creation of a network of researchers. Researchers will be invited to register their profile into an on-line and dynamic database. Networking will then be stimulated thanks to the involvement in national consultations and to the communication of relevant information for scientists from the agricultural and food sector.

BAFN news

BAFN database contains already 1.000 registrations

Around 500 research units and more than 550 companies from the agri-food sector have been identified in Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia, Former Republic of Macedonia and Serbia. The registration on bafn.eu opened in September 2006. Six months later, already **1.000 answers** have been received. There a **strong interest from researchers** with more than 600 profiles already collected. These results are very encouraging. Those who registered are informed regularly on the opportunities offered by the EU.

Read more

▶ <http://www.bafn.eu>

BAFN mapping exercise: state of play

A report describing the research landscape in agri-food research in the Western Balkan is under preparation. The report will describe the research activities (which research topics are covered by the research organisations from the WBC) as well as the research capacities (number of researchers, research infrastructures etc.). The report will use the results of a survey: the research groups registered in bafn.eu are asked to complete a detailed questionnaire about their activities. To-date, around 150 answers have been collected. Research groups and researchers are invited to complete their questionnaire before the end of March 2007.

Read more

▶ <http://www.bafn.eu/mapping>

BAFN foresight exercise: state of play

Reports presenting a general overview of agri-food research in Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia, Former Republic of Macedonia and Serbia are under preparation. The reports will identify the main strenght and weaknesses of the agri-food research systems. These reports will be used as a basis for an expert consultation organised in March 2007. It will be followed by workshops organised in each country before the summer 2007.

Read more

▶ <http://www.bafn.eu/foresight>

Next BAFN meeting on 20 April 2007 in FYROM

The third BAFN partners meeting will take place in Former Republic of Macedonia on the 20.04.2007. The main focus of the meeting will be to discuss the foresight and mapping studies. Ms. Rosanna Ploumidou

from ETAT will also present the FP6 project EU-Balkan-FABNET. EU-BALKAN-FABNET will complement the activity of BAFN by proposing training of FP7 in each Western Balkan Country.

Read more

► <http://www.bafn.eu>

European news

Example of projects financed by the EU

Between 2002 and 2006, organisations from the WBC participated in 14 research projects financed under the thematic priority "Food Quality and safety". One project will be presented in each issue of BAFN newsletter.

The STREP project SAFIR (Rational use of water for quality and safe crop products) aims at developing irrigation management and water saving technology. The overall objective is to produce high quality and safe vegetable crops using low quality water resources. The project started in October 2005 and will end in 2009. One of the 17 partners is the department of agrochemistry and plant physiology from the university of Belgrade (faculty of agriculture). The contact person is Radmila Stikic.

Read more

► <http://www.safir4eu.org/SAFIR.asp>

Recent reports: Research cooperation and knowledge transfer

Significant cultural barriers, legal differences and difficulties in finding partners are some of the main factors hampering transnational research collaboration in Europe. Transnational cooperation, which is not part of a long-term, structural alliance, is therefore relatively unattractive for both the public and the private sector due to the added complexities, which such collaboration brings with it. This is one of the conclusions in the draft report on the online public consultation on transnational research cooperation and knowledge transfer.

Read more

► http://ec.europa.eu/invest-in-research/pdf/download_en/consult_report.pdf

Enlargement process: Latest news around WBC

EU-Western Balkans Forum: The regular meeting at the level of Ministers of Foreign Affairs took place on February 12th in General Affairs Council in Brussels. The EU Council President Frank-Walter described the relations between the EU and WBC as positively developing. The reflection of that meeting was on strengthening cooperation in economic and security affairs in regional dimension.

Bosnia and Herzegovina: The European Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn and European Commission President José Manuel Barroso congratulated Bosnia and Herzegovina for the formation of the new government. They also assure the new Chairman of the country's Council of Ministers Nikola Špirić that they will work closely to support Bosnia and Herzegovina in its European integration.

Serbia: "A new reform-oriented and pro-European government in Serbia can make a new start and get back on the road to Europe, and regain lost time", said European Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn on February 12th at discussion meeting among the EU Ministers of Foreign Affairs at the General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) and that was one of principal conclusions.

Read more

► http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/press_corner/newsletter/index_en.htm

EU funding – FP7 Possibilities

FP7 Cooperation programme: Opportunities for WBC researchers

The call FP7-KBBE-2007-1 allocates 192 million euros for research in the agricultural, food and biotechnology sector. Around 80 projects will be financed in 2007. Organisations from the WBC can participate in any of these projects but there are 2 specific topics for which the EU expect participation of WBC partners: the topic KBBE-2007-1-4-05 (enlargement network) and the topic KBBE-2007-1-4-10 (sharka virus). One project is specifically targeted at WBC country: the topic KBBE-2007-2-1-02 entitled "Developing research tools for food consumer science in the Western balkan Countries". The deadline for proposal submission is the 02.05.2007.

Read more

► http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc/index.cfm?fuseaction=UserSite.CooperationDetailsCallPage&call_id=16

FP7 Capacities programme: Special calls for the WBC

The call FP7-REGPOT-2007-3 allocates 8 million euros to strengthen the capacities of research organisations from Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia, FYROM, Montenegro and Serbia. Each project should involve 3 organisations: one from a New Member State (convergence region), one from a Member State and one from a Western Balkan Country. The projects should include activities such as networking, strengthening of scientific relationships, exchange of know-how. The recruitment of researchers and the acquisition of equipments will also be financed. Each project will receive around 1.2 million euros for a 3-year period. Around 6 projects will be financed. The deadline for submitting the application is the 24.04.2007.

Read more

► http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc/index.cfm?fuseaction=UserSite.CapacitiesDetailsCallPage&call_id=31

FP7 call for INCO-Net

The call FP7-INCO-2007-1 allocates 17 million euros to settle cooperation platforms between the EU and six different groups of countries (Western Balkan Countries, Mediterranean countries, Latin America, Asia, East Europe and Africa). One project will be financed to coordinate activities between the EU and the WBC. One of the objectives will be to identify research needs and capacities in the WBC. The call indicates that the Steering Platform on Research for the Western Balkan Countries (see-science.eu) established by the Austrian organisation ZSI should play a central role in the future project. The deadline is the 02.05.2007.

Read more

► http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc/index.cfm?fuseaction=UserSite.CapacitiesDetailsCallPage&call_id=13

SEE-ERA.NET Pilot Joint Call

The EU project Southeast European ERA. network (SEE-ERA.NET) has launched a call for proposals. The call is targeted at 3 sectors: agri-food (sustainable production and management of biological resources from land, forest and aquatic environments), ICT and environment. Three types of projects will be financed: research projects, network projects and summer schools. The deadline for submitting the application is the 31.03.2007.

Read more

► <http://www.see-era.net/pjc/calltext.html>

WBC opportunities**EU-Balkan-FABNet project**

The project EU-Balkan-FABNet (EU-Western Balkan network for training and promotion of cooperation in research activities with in the FAB theme of FP7) started on the 1st of January 2007 and will run for two years, ending in December 2008. This project is targeted at the agri-food sector in the WBC. It will complement the activities of BAFN. It will in particular offer the opportunity to scientists from the WBC to receive free training on FP7. More information will be given in the next newsletter.

Read more

► www.balkan-fabnet.eu

1 Useful information

Agrifoodresearch.net

AgriFoodResearch.net provides a selection of information on the European research programmes in the area of food, agriculture and biotechnology. Agrifoodresearch.net contains:

- A directory of researchers in the New Member States and in the Candidate Countries. The directory contains more than 2.000 researchers.
- A library of FP6 projects: the web site provides detailed information on the 31 Integrated Projects and 12 Network of Excellence financed under the thematic priority Food Quality and Safety of FP6.
- Information on 15 ERA-Net relevant to the sector.
- The announcements of meetings, conferences or workshops as well as latest news on the FP7 and on activities of running FP6 projects.
- A database of FP7 calls for proposals.

Read more

► www.agrifoodresearch.net

see-science.eu

See-science.eu provides a selection of useful information for scientists from the Western Balkan Countries. It is not specific to the agri-food sector but it contains an exhaustive review of information relevant to scientific activities in the Western Balkans. The site contains in particular a selection of news on European research programme, a document database as well as directories of persons and organisations. We recommend to subscribe to the e-journal that is published every 3-month. The next issue will focus on the agri-food sector.

Read more

► www.see-science.eu

For more information

Project manager (Euroquality)

Marie Fauchadour

Tel +33 1 44 69 99 80

Marie.fauchadour@euroquality.fr

Partner in XXX