

**South East European Ministerial Round Table
on Science, Technology & Innovation**

23 November 2012

Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Joint Declaration

Ministers and high level representatives responsible for science from South Eastern European countries met in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, on 23 November 2012 on occasion of the ***Round Table on Science, Technology & Innovation*** organized by the Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe located in Venice, Italy.

The participants to the Round Table express their thanks and appreciation to the Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to UNESCO and its Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe for the hospitality and the excellent organisation of the event.

The Ministers of Science of South Eastern European countries share the common view that science transcends political borders, enhancing cooperation and acting as a catalyst for consolidating stability in South Eastern Europe (SEE). Knowledge production and accessible diffusion play a key role for the enhancement of innovation, sustainable economic development, and social well-being. To this aim the regional cooperation in the fields of science, technology and innovation (STI) shall be strengthened.

The Ministers acknowledge the effort undertaken by UNESCO and its Regional Bureau of Venice during the past year and welcome the opportunity afforded by UNESCO to Member States from South Eastern Europe to meet periodically to discuss major issues in science technology and innovation and higher education policies. The continuous support and the encouragement provided to the creation and sustainable development of scientific collaborative networks in some fields of high regional importance deserve special recognition. The Ministers also acknowledge the relevance of the European Union (EU) Framework Programmes and other EU funding schemes as well as the activities of the other international organizations. To this regard, they agree about the crucial importance of the synergic collaboration among such international institutions in order to achieve the common objectives of integration of SEE countries into the European Research Area (ERA).

The Ministers recognize that it is important that South-East Europe speak with one voice on a European level, on specific issues commonly agreed. To this aim they commit themselves to increasingly coordinate common positions prior to meetings in Brussels using them as platforms to push macro-regional agendas.

The Ministers agreed the following conclusions and recommendations:

- Recognizing the crucial role of scientific research and higher education in their respective country policies and strategies for socio-economic development, SEE countries will continue to draw attention towards increasing budgets to be allocated for science, technology and innovation
- Generate and encourage public understanding and awareness of science highlighting gender equality, social inclusion and participation
- Further develop existing evaluation mechanisms for science, technology and innovation in order to be able to continue comparing and assessing progress on different levels; open national and transnational evaluation mechanisms to a diverse group of research and innovation stakeholders including civil society organizations and companies and future investors
- Facilitate partnerships between public and private sectors in the field of science, technology and innovation and encouraging both public and private R&D organizations and universities to use public research infrastructures and utilities (such as academic computer networks and digital libraries with e-journals and other electronic sources research information)
- Focus attention on a limited number of priorities and regional smart specialization activities where some networks already successfully operate or some new ones may be developed; strengthen these networks with the view of making them interesting partners for neighboring regions and states; support the best national research centres thus enabling them to participate in European/regional networks
- Consider the quality of statistical data on STI and the statistical system on research and development, as precondition leading to develop sound and effective strategy in science, technology and innovation
- Increase strategies and investments for international science, technology and innovation projects and researchers capacities in SEE; take advantage of existing EU Cohesion funds, national and regional IPA funds for research and innovation project and for research infrastructure funding and measures that foresee the strategic inclusion of Diaspora scientists

- Focus more and different programmes on leadership training for both domestic and regional research and innovation policy makers
- Promote bilateral and regional cooperative agreements, within the SEE Region and to the pan-European dimension and beyond; provide easy access to research facilities, infrastructures and science documentation and publications
- Increase utilization and enhance synergies and coordination between different instruments, initiatives and programmes (IPA, EIB, Bilateral, etc.) for facilitating capacity-building and sharing of research infrastructures

The participants of the Ministerial Round Table called upon UNESCO, EU and other international organizations:

To support SEE countries in strengthening domestic and regional capacities to enhance science, technology and innovation policies as well as strengthening the science-policy-society interface as key levers for peace and a sustainable future.

November 23, 2012

Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina