PODGORIČKI KLUB
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MONTENEGRO
MINISTRY
OF SCIENCE

NEW NARRATIVE
FOR THE WESTERN BALKANS
VISION 2030

1ST FORUM

SCIENCE AND INNOVATION
2030 VISION FOR THE WESTERN BALKANS

April 9th 2019

CLOSING REMARKS and RECOMMENDATIONS

Today, we had a chance to push further the discussion about the role of science and innovation in the transformation of our region.

The **RCC** is fully committed to supporting us in making a successful transition to knowledge-based economy. However, we as the participants in the RCC forums and working groups need to strongly engage ourselves. We need our public servants to gain confidence that they are important agents of change that can make a real difference.

The example of **EIT** is very much inspiring us in which direction to go. This institute has taken the difficult path to transform European universities into entrepreneurial ones and to optimize the strengths of the European companies. We can learn a lot from them through collaboration where EIT is very open to us. It would be great to have the Western Balkan economies as the members of the Knowledge and Innovation Communities of EIT. In particular, it would be great if EIT hubs could be open in our region. We need to further explore these opportunities.

The Widening part of Horizon 2020 and future Horizon Europe is offering to the Region a window of opportunity how to enter the club of the strongest actors in R&I in Europe. We have heard success stories, such as BioSense and the Innovation Centre Zagreb, which are true lighthouses. However, we don't see many more examples of such dedicated teams which started to understand the EU priorities and directions many years ago and which could make successful connections – becoming true European centers of excellence or innovation hubs. We need to further explore the ways in which many of our researchers and innovators can become better integrated into the European networks.

There is no doubt that large-scale research infrastructures, projects like **SEEIIST**, are of utmost importance for our Region. Such infrastructures will really catalyze excellence, will help to slow-down and to even revert the brain drain, but will also trigger complementary technologies

and in this way bring new values to our societies. Such projects can only be realized if we show strong regional collaboration and strong political commitment.

The Council of Europe has given significant support to the education systems and it is great news that it will be also focus on R&I.

The Berlin Process is an important framework of collaboration. In the future we should work on that the link between academia and policy making becomes more interactive and also operates faster, realizing that our collaboration creates a new narrative.

CERN is the best example of the true spirit of international cooperation. It is also the best example of what true cooperation based on the spirit of Science for Peace can create. Science as a mediator of diplomacy can always serve as a benchmark of our efforts. At this very moment, CERN is helping us in building our own regional capacities by offering not only its high-tec infrastructure, but also many educational programs for our students and teachers. On top, CERN is explicitly helping the SEEIIST Project. We are very grateful for this strong hand. In the past, CERN has actually also rendered such valuable services to European science beyond its main task by offering help for the foundation of EMBO and ESO, not to mention the invaluable support given to the SESAME project in the Near East.

MINISTERIAL PANEL

The rich discussions during the Ministerial Panel have clearly illustrated the importance of science and innovation on a very wide scale.

It was agreed that the new narrative for the development of the Western Balkan Region, concerning in particular Science and Innovation as the boost for social development, be placed on top of the high-level political agendas of our economies. This mechanism requires strong inter-ministerial cooperation and the need to adopt the concept of Open Science and Open Innovation. This is the only way to reach all the structures of our society and the well-being of our citizens. Harmonization with EU policies in this field is an integral part of these efforts. Here we expect significant support in terms of capacity building, taking into account primarily the common priorities and needs of this Region. We also count on the implementation of the newly adopted EU Strategy for the Western Balkans with its Action plan of six concrete Flagship Initiatives targeting specific areas of common interest. For that, adequate funding is absolutely indispensable.

The JRC of the European Commission is an excellent organizational form how to foster scientific advice for European policies. It is also helping all countries in common strategic directions such as Smart Specialization Strategies. Since recently it has started giving push for technology transfer activities. In that respect we need to take advantage of the JRC for capacity building and networking, which is also of extreme importance.

Last but not least, we should never forget that the progress brought by science and innovation should be checked against the good which it does to our societies. We should ask people about the direction R&I should take and discuss about what are the benefits and drawbacks. Therefore, the importance of social sciences and humanities in the whole spectrum and processes of science and innovation should also be emphasized. More means and new means how to integrate soft and hard sciences should be sought -, we are just starting to learn about it. Participation in the European Social Survey can help us in having a reliable societal echo of the technology driven society we live in.