

Strengthening the Strategic Cooperation Between the EU and Western Balkan Region in the field of ICT Research

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Abstract: This document provides an overview of the implementation and outcomes of the Regional Conference held on 11 and 12 December 2008, in Belgrade. The conference engaged representatives of ministries from the Western Balkan countries, researchers from academia and the private ICT sector. Participants originated from all Western Balkan countries (including Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia and Montenegro) as well as neighbouring and EU countries (e.g. Slovenia, Italy, Greece, Austria, Germany). During the Conference, the regional ICT R&D priorities were discussed as well as the barriers to EU-Western Balkan R&D collaboration. A key aim of the Conference was to discuss concrete recommendations for enhancing EU-WB R&D collaboration, targeting both Western Balkan and EU decision-makers.

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V2	29.12.2009	Second version	Raphael Koumeri (PLANET)
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V4	31.01.2009	Final version	Soumi Papadopoulou, Raphael Koumeri (PLANET), integrating comments by all partners

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents an overview of the implementation of the regional Conference “*Towards an Information Society in the Western Balkans*”, organised in Belgrade on 11-12 December 2008.

The Conference was co-organised by SCORE and WBC-INCO.Net projects and hosted at the premises of the Serbian Chamber of Commerce, in Belgrade.

The aims of the Conference were to:

- Present and discuss the regional ICT R&D priorities identified by SCORE and WBC-INCO.Net.
- Discuss the barriers and challenges to R&D activities in the region, in the context of EU-Western Balkan collaboration.
- Present EU (FP7-ICT) opportunities for regional co-operation as well as regional initiatives.
- Identify concrete recommendations/actions for enhanced regional ICT R&D collaboration targeting both Western Balkan and EU decision-makers.

In total, the Conference attracted 109 participants, including representatives of ministries from the Western Balkan countries, researchers from academia and the private ICT sector. Participants originated from all Western Balkan countries (including Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia and Montenegro) as well as neighbouring and EU countries (e.g. Slovenia, Italy, Greece, Austria, Germany, the Netherlands).

The present deliverable, after describing the conference concept and objectives also provides information on its implementation and final evaluation.

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1. CONTEXT AND CONFERENCE OBJECTIVES

SCORE is a Specific Support Action that addresses the need for well-defined future research & development priorities and aims at enhancing the scientific co-operation between the Western Balkan (WB) region and the EU, specifically in the thematic area of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT).

During its first activity phase, SCORE has identified a number of common regional ICT Research and Development (R&D) priorities through a broad consultation process¹, involving both ICT experts and the ICT R&D communities. All the identified ICT R&D priorities² were considered as appropriate for:

- reflecting the actual research capacities and potential,
- meeting the technological / industrial trends,
- addressing real socio-economic needs per country, and
- being also mapped to the ICT challenges of the EU FP7 ICT work programmes.

They were hence assessed as concrete *ICT R&D priorities in the Western Balkan region* for the future mutual cooperation with the EU.

During the second phase of the project, barriers to ICT R&D collaboration were identified including institutional, financial, human resource, infrastructure, cultural and other barriers. Moreover, concrete recommendations in order to minimise these barriers were proposed targeting both Western Balkan and EU decision-makers. The barriers and recommendations were further elaborated during dedicated consultation sessions in the four country-specific ICT Thematic Workshops involving 139 participants in October 2008.

The principle aim of the regional Conference was to discuss with regional policy-makers and R&D actors the main results of the SCORE project (i.e. the regional R&D priorities, barriers and proposed recommendations³) with a view to challenging/validating their accuracy and obtaining further feedback.

In more detail, the objectives of the **regional Conference** were to:

- Present and discuss the regional ICT R&D priorities identified by SCORE and WBC-INCO.Net.
- Discuss the barriers and challenges to R&D activities in the region, in the context of EU-Western Balkan collaboration.
- Present EU (FP7-ICT) opportunities for regional co-operation as well as regional initiatives.
- Identify concrete recommendations/actions for enhanced regional ICT R&D collaboration targeting both Western Balkan and EU decision-makers.

¹ For more information see D1 Consultation Process Plan & Scoping Questionnaire

² The common regional ICT R&D priorities are illustrated in the Policy Paper (D7)

³ Documented in the Policy Paper (D7)

2. OVERVIEW OF CONFERENCE IMPLEMENTATION

2.1 Conference data

Conference Title	Towards an Information Society for the Western Balkans
Date	11&12 December 2008
Venue	Serbian Chamber of Commerce (IT association), Belgrade
Organisers	SCORE project & WBC-INCO.Net project
Number of participants	109
Countries represented	All Western Balkan countries, EU and neighbouring countries
Conference website	http://www.score-project.eu/conference.html

2.2 Ministerial and EC support of the Conference

A critical factor for the successful outcome of the Conference was the support of the event both by the European Commission and policy-makers in the region. Participants were reassured on the importance of the event and project through the continuous and active participation of the EC representative (Project Officer of SCORE). Moreover, the Conference was supported by high-level representatives of the Government of Serbia, as well as policy-makers from other countries in region (e.g. Montenegro, Albania and Bosnia-Herzegovina).

The following policy-makers actively participated in the Conference:

- Vlassios Venner, Project Officer, European Commission, Information Society and Media Directorate-General, International Relations.
- Radosav Cerovic, Assistant Minister of Science of Serbia (Department For Technological Development, Transfer Of Technologies And Innovation System).
- Viktor Nedovic, Assistant Minister of Science of Serbia (Department For International Scientific And Technological Cooperation).
- Jelena Surculija, Assistant Minister of the Telecommunications and Information Society of Serbia, (Sector for International Cooperation)
- Natasa Radovic, Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Society of Serbia
- Arben Fagu, Adviser, Minister of Education and Sciences of Albania
- Tatjana Knezevic, Ministry of Education & Science of Montenegro
- Zeljko Knezevic, Ministry of Communications and Transport of Bosnia-Herzegovina
- Miroslav Radinkovic, Ministry of Science and Technology of Republika Srpska (BiH)
- Marija Pantic, Cabinet of the Minister of Foreign Direct Investments (FYR of Macedonia)

2.3 Logic of presentations and panels

As mentioned earlier, the main purpose of the conference was to present the main results of the project (i.e the Policy Paper) and to obtain further feedback from R&D actors across the region. In line with this goal, the logic of the agenda was as follows:

- On the first day, the main results of the project were presented (focusing on the Policy Paper) , followed by an open panel discussion on the countries' own role in fostering regional collaboration
- On the second day, the EU and regional initiatives on R&D collaboration were presented followed by an open panel discussion on the same topic.

The panels on both days were multi-disciplinary and regional. They were composed of:

- Policy-makers (e.g. representatives of ministries)
- Academics (e.g. ICT professors)
- ICT industry representatives (including SMEs).

The Conference speeches tackled the following topics:

- Overview of the ICT R&D environment in the Western Balkan region , identifying the different levels of capacities and readiness
- Regional ICT R&D priorities as identified during the SCORE and WBC-INCO.Net consultation processes
- Barriers to R&D in the WB region that have emerged within the same project activities.
- Overview of FP7, the ICT theme and Western Balkan participation so far. Presentation of the 4th ICT Call. It was considered appropriate to present an example of an FP6 project which was welcomed by the audience
- Presentation of regional initiatives, and the example of CeGD (Centre for eGovernance Development for South East Europe).

Moreover, on the 10th of December, a preparatory consultation session was held by WBC-INCO.Net in order to obtain inputs on priorities for Croatia and Montenegro (countries not addressed in SCORE).

All presentations made during the Conference are available through the project website <http://www.score-project.eu/conference.html> or through the project co-ordinator (PLANET S.A.).

The agenda for both days is provided in Annex I.

2.4 Mobilisation of target audience & dissemination

In order to fulfil the aims of the Conference, the audience targeted were policy-makers and R&D representatives (from academia and ICT industry) from the Western Balkans and broader region. The WBC-INCO.Net project was responsible primarily for attracting policy-makers (given that project partners are relevant ministries of science and telecommunications), while SCORE identified primarily R&D stakeholders.

The following mobilisation schemes were engaged by SCORE:

- SCORE partners in Albania, FYR of Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina invited up to 10 R&D representatives from their respective countries to attend the Conference
- A list of 200 potential participants from Serbia was compiled based on available contacts within the SCORE project and provided to the Serbian Chamber of Commerce that made invitations on behalf of the SCORE and WBC-INCO.Net projects.

Potential participants were informed on how to register to the event and were provided with an initial draft agenda. Subsequently, participants who registered for the conference (either online or via email) were provided with an updated agenda and the Policy Paper (as background information / preparation for the Conference).

The Conference was disseminated through the SCORE portal (www.score-project.eu/conference.html) as well as through the WBC.INCO.Net portal. Moreover, the Conference was broadly disseminated through the participation of SCORE partners in key conferences in Europe (e.g. ICT event in Lyon) and other events within the Western Balkan countries.

In parallel, targeted dissemination activities were carried out by the local Western Balkan responsible partners as well as the Serbian Chamber of Commerce (who hosted the conference) through the dissemination of the Conference announcements, invitation letters and reminders to target R&D representatives (e.g. persons involved in the SCORE consultation process and ICT workshops) and making use of the local partners' websites.

Finally PLANET and ZSI invited a number of EU R&D actors who could benefit from participation in the conference (e.g. partners in related FP projects).

2.5 Profile of participants

At the Conference, 109 persons attended in both days out of a total of 160 persons who had initially registered. This number is higher than the initially targeted audience of 80 to 100 persons, which was achieved due to the synergies of joint organisation with WBC-INCO.Net. It should be mentioned that out of the 109 participants, 20 are representatives of the SCORE project partners and 98 are "external" (non-SCORE) participants.

Participants came from all targeted Western Balkan, neighbouring and EU countries. As it could have been expected, the participation was mainly from the broader region, while approximately half of the participants came from Serbia.

The distribution of all participants by country is as follows:

Participants' country of Origin	Total
Serbia	57
Albania	8
Bosnia-Herzegovina	15
FYR of Macedonia	13
Montenegro	5
Croatia	2
Slovenia	1
Austria	1
Belgium	1
Germany	1
Greece	3
Italy	1
The Netherlands	1
Total	109

Table 1 – Profile of participants by country

Moreover, the Conference brought together a balanced mixture of policy-makers and R&D representatives across the region as targeted. The distribution of participants by type of organisations is as follows:

Participants' type of organisation	Total
National authorities, policy-makers	12
Higher Education representatives	26
ICT industry representatives	36
Other (e.g. innovation centres, think tanks, NGOs)	24
N/a (information not available)	11
Total	109

Table 2 – Profile of participants by organisation type

The entire list of participants is available by the Project co-ordinator (PLANET) however the formal consent of individual participants would have to be obtained for the distribution of contacts.

4. KEY POINTS RAISED DURING THE CONFERENCE

In this section, the main points raised during the Conference are summarised. These will be incorporated in the relevant project deliverables and in particular contribute towards the finalisation of the Policy Paper.

4.1 Key points from the 1st Day

Following the welcome speeches by the conference organisers and the Assistant Minister of Science of Serbia (**Mr. Radosav Cerovic**), a presentation was made by **Mr. Vlassios Venner** (the project officer of SCORE, representative of the EC DG INFSO). Mr. Venner presented the participation profile of the Western Balkans in the ICT calls of the 7th Framework Programme. He mentioned that although in the next two years there are no specific calls targeting the region, there are horizontal actions foreseen. During a brief discussion that followed, it was mentioned that there is a feeling that region lacks competition for example vis a vis the New Member States and that there is still a need for targeted support in the region by FP7. On the other hand, it was mentioned that *“the EU is growing fast, while the region is waiting. We have to react fast”*.

An overview of the ICT R&D Environment in the Western Balkans was made by **Mr. Djuro Kutlaca** from the Institute Mihajlo Pupin (partner in WBC-INCO.Net project). The main issue raised in the discussion is the lack of data / statistics on ICT environment (e.g. lack of transparency of funds, access to outcomes of projects). This was mentioned as a key barrier to understanding the ICT environment, barriers and problems in the region. A representative of the Serbian Statistical Office indicated that there are some available data on ICT R&D activities that abide to the Eurostat methodology. Apparently the existence of such data is not broadly known.

A presentation of the regional ICT R&D priorities identified through the broad consultation process of SCORE project (in Albania, BiH, Serbia and FYROM) as well as the priority-setting exercises of WBC-INCO.Net (for Croatia and Montenegro) were presented by **Ms. Jelena Pantelic** from Information Society SCG. Five regional priorities were presented (in line with the Policy Paper documented in D7) as suitable for EU-Western Balkan R&D collaboration as follows:

- ICTs for Government and eGovernment
- ICTs for Enterprises and eBusiness
- ICTs for Learning and eLearning
- Software Engineering
- Internet & Broadband Technologies

The key points raised in the discussion following this presentation was that switching from supply-driven to demand-driven priorities is important, albeit difficult. Other priorities suggested to be interesting for the region are: ICTs for Environment & Energy (e.g. Bio-technologies & reduction of CO2 emissions), ICTs for Transport (geo-coded GIS), eCulture (mentioned in one evaluation form).

The next presentation focused on the barriers to ICT R&D in the region and key challenges both from a regional and EU perspective. The presentation was jointly made by **Soumi Papadopoulou** from PLANET and **René Wintjes** from UNU-MERIT. The key points raised in the short discussion that followed was the suggestion to enable visiting scientists to join existing FP projects to further build capacities. Mr. Venner mentioned it is possible to invite researchers into existing projects e.g. in Networks of Excellence (and that this will be envisaged after 2010). Moreover one further institutional barrier mentioned by the audience are the unclear intellectual property rights.

An interactive panel discussion followed that was moderated by **Raphael Koumeri** from PLANET.

Some key messages from the first day were highlighted as follows:

- *“Once we want to apply for FP projects we should not ask for discounts. We should develop our own capacities”*
- *“There is no regional research, only global research. We must first enhance our capacities both at research institutions and personal level”.*
- *“We should do research based on the needs of the market. And Governments should develop policies to address these real needs”*
- *“Not all priorities are necessarily “private-market” driven. Priorities should reflect the needs of society, be demand-driven.*
- *“There is a top-down approach by policy-makers and a bottom-up approach by academia and SMEs”. It is important to address both approaches.*

All the key issues raised during the panel discussion are presented in section 4.3 together with the points raised in the second day’s panel.

4.2 Key points from the 2nd Day

The second day of the conference started at 9.20 with the summary from the first day provided by **Mrs. Ulrike Kunze** from PT-DLR (Project Management Agency / International Bureau of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research at the German Aerospace Centre).

While the first day focused on the presentation of the WB countries’ ICT environment, ICT research priorities as well as on the discussion on the countries’ own role for overcoming the still existing challenges to cooperation, on the second day the spotlight moved from the local dimension to respectively the WB regional and European ones.

Namely, the opportunities resulting from the FP7 4th ICT call, were presented by **Mrs. Svetlana Bogdanovic**, who is the ICT/NCP for FP7 at the Ministry of Science of Serbia.

Mrs. Bogdanovic, beside describing the different challenges addressed by the ICT WP 2009-2010 and providing information on the amount of budget allocated for this call, has especially also highlighted that the projects that will be financed shall have an impact in the period 2015 – 2020, that shall largely involve innovative SMEs and shall aim at bringing the final users within the research circle. With reference to the ICT research fields which were specifically identified by SCORE as priorities for WB-EU collaboration are almost all covered by the challenges financeable by the 4th call. Only the projects addressing the ICT for Learning and eLearning priority shall wait for the next call to be launched.

As an example of WB-EU initiative funded by the EU Sixth Framework Programme, the RACWEB project was furthermore presented by **Mrs. Gordana Dzamic**, from the Ministry of Finance of Serbia. This project started on 01/07/2007 and involves 4 central customs administrations and 3 IT consulting companies, who are collaborating with the aim to improve the risk assessment while obtaining comparable IT systems. The initiative will last 30 in total and the expected results are a new approach to risk assessment, a stronger regional cooperation in this field, new comparable systems allowing for faster but safer trade.

Mrs. Dzamic, after her presentation, also raised the general problem of the sustainability of projects after their natural duration. The audience called for a more direct commitment of the local parties with this regard but it was also put forward that the EU Commission should either directly follow-up its initiatives or be stricter while evaluating project proposals in terms of their future sustainability.

The fourth presentation of the day was “Development of Information Society in WBC / SEE: Contribution of neighbouring & EU countries” provided by **Mr. Blaz Golob** of the Centre for eGovernance Development for South East Europe (SEE) in Slovenia. Mr. Golob explained the partnership behind the Centre, its mission and objectives as well as the inspiring vision which is not only to implement specific initiatives but also to contribute in a more proactive way to the ideas that will foster the creation of the Information Society in the SEE and in the European continent. The CeGD coordinates activities, transfers knowledge & education, provides training and research with the aim to support institutional linkages of SEE, eSEE and bSEE initiatives, network programs and training nodes, etc.

The conference further continued with a **panel discussion** moderated by **Ms. Ulrike Kunze** from PT-DLR aiming at identifying the next steps for the regional cooperation, i.e. the necessary concrete actions & recommendations considering both the EU & regional dimensions. The key points from the panel discussion are presented in the next section.

4.3 Summary of key points from panel discussions

In the table below the key points raised from the panels on both days are presented (due to the similarity of issues raised) and categorised accordingly.

Type of issues	Key points raised
Institutional / policy-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visa issues must be facilitated for mobility of researchers • Governments should further promote regional collaboration + need to develop a regional research policy. Need for more regional initiatives/projects based on existing examples. • Regulations of countries are not aligned with EU regulations. “EU should put pressure to governments to align”. • Need for capacity building within ministries (e.g. training of civil servants on FP7) • Need for better access to public policies and strategies • Lack of organisational support. E.g. need for more National Contact Points.
Financial issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is lack of funding and lack of incentives for funding. • Promote public-private partnerships • In Montenegro, proposals that are ranked high but not awarded are funded by national funds • There could be no taxes for donations in R&D • There could be no (or lower) taxes for SMEs involved in R&D • give incentives such as travel grants for brokerage events, preparatory meetings for proposal writing • Incentives for ex-pats to return to their countries
Education system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of research students • Lack of PHD studies and programmes on ICT • Primary and secondary schools offer inappropriate IT courses • Lack of ICT professionals • No/limited public funds for PHD studies in Serbia (also, there is a regulation

Type of issues	Key points raised
	<p>that no more than 5 PHD students are “produced” in 3 years)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need a regional students’ exchange initiative
Human resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for training on procedures and project management skills • Proposers need support from professional consultants esp. on administrative issues • Two specific proposals for a mobility program were suggested: a) extension of consortia (with more partners);b) visiting program for individual researchers • Need of an individual researchers’ (personal) mobility grants within the region
ICT related industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often SMEs don’t see the value of participating in FP projects. The value-added for organisations and SMEs to participate in FP should be promoted • Research in small SMEs is more agile • IT companies with R&D activities should be recognised as R&D organisations
Cultural / Other issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WB research is not related to needs of the market. It is important to have demand-driven research. • It is important to create demand for ICT research (& development) .e.g business solutions create further demand for ICTs • The young generation are a part of Europe in terms of mentality and education. • Networks among researchers and organisations in the region are needed (with support from EU)⁴. • It is important to exploit existing knowledge and contacts to avoid duplication and waste of time and resources e.g. NCPs, Regional Cooperation Council • Need to increase awareness on EU policies and the Framework Programmes • Researchers in the WB countries should participate more in the evaluation process of FP proposals to gain valuable know-how. • Share success stories and best practices and disseminate to public. Highlight what are the benefits (and added value) of participating in FP projects.

Table 3 – Summary of key points from panel discussions

⁴ With respect to this, Ms. Diana Simic (Chair of eSEE) announced that eSEE agenda+ will build a database with public and private research organisations in the region.

5. CONFERENCE EVALUATION

5.1 Evaluation by Conference Participants

This section presents the evaluation of the conference by participants who either provided their feedback in a form at the end of the event or by completing and returning the same form electronically. Participants also received a thank you note and link to presentations after the conference by email.

In total, 28 evaluation forms were received, representing 30% of total participants (109).

5.1.1. Feedback on the Content of the Conference

Participants were asked if they were satisfied with the content of the presentation for each presentation made. The feedback obtained is as follows.

ANSWERS	No of Responses	%
Most satisfied	4	14
Satisfied	20	71
Partly satisfied	4	14
Rather dissatisfied	0	0
Dissatisfied	0	0

Table 4 – Feedback on “EU FP7 ICT Theme & Western Balkan participation”

ANSWERS	No of Responses	%
Most satisfied	5	18
Satisfied	18	64
Partly satisfied	3	11
Rather dissatisfied	2	7
Dissatisfied		

Table 5 – Feedback on “The ICT environment in the Western Balkans”

One comment on this presentation was that it needs to be shortened & more to the point.

ANSWERS	No of Responses	%
Most satisfied	6	21
Satisfied	14	50
Partly satisfied	6	21
Rather dissatisfied	1	3
Dissatisfied	1	3

Table 6 – Feedback on “Regional ICT R&D priorities”

ANSWERS	No of Responses	%
Most satisfied	4	14
Satisfied	8	29
Partly satisfied	4	14
Rather dissatisfied	1	3
Dissatisfied	0	0

Table 7 – Feedback on “Key barriers and challenges in ICT Research”

ANSWERS	No of Responses	%
Most satisfied	3	11
Satisfied	11	40
Partly satisfied	2	7
Rather dissatisfied	1	3
Dissatisfied	0	0

Table 8 – Feedback on 1st day Panel Discussion “The Next steps: what is needed for regional cooperation (the country’s own role)”

ANSWERS	No of Responses	%
Most satisfied	4	14
Satisfied	18	64
Partly satisfied	5	18
Rather dissatisfied	0	0
Dissatisfied	1	3

Table 9 – Feedback on “Opportunities for EU – Western Balkan research collaboration”

ANSWERS	No of Responses	%
Most satisfied	1	3,5
Satisfied	20	71,5
Partly satisfied	3	11
Rather dissatisfied	2	7
Dissatisfied	1	3

Table 10 – Feedback on “Development of Information Society in WBC – SEE”

ANSWERS	No of Responses	%
Most satisfied	1	3,5
Satisfied	19	68

Partly satisfied	5	17
Rather dissatisfied	1	3
Dissatisfied		

Table 11 – Feedback on 2nd day Panel Discussion “The Next steps: concrete actions & recommendations for regional cooperation (EU & regional dimension)”

5.1.2. Feedback on the Organisation of the Conference

Participants were also asked to provide their feedback on the organisational aspects of the Conference.

ANSWERS	No of Responses	%
Most satisfied	9	32
Satisfied	15	54
Partly satisfied	3	10
Rather dissatisfied	1	3
Dissatisfied	0	0

Table 12 – Level of satisfaction on overall organisation of the event

ANSWERS	No of Responses	%
Most satisfied	5	18
Satisfied	15	54
Partly satisfied	7	25
Rather dissatisfied	1	3
Dissatisfied	0	0

Table 13 – Satisfaction with resources and material presented at the event

ANSWERS	No of Responses	%
Most satisfied	7	25
Satisfied	15	54
Partly satisfied	4	14
Rather dissatisfied	1	3
Dissatisfied	1	3

Table 14 – Satisfaction with the time dedicated to the various topics

ANSWERS	No of Responses	%
Most satisfied	6	21

Satisfied	10	36
Partly satisfied	3	10
Rather dissatisfied	0	0
Dissatisfied	1	3

Table 15 – Satisfaction with the style and level of communication between organisers and participants

Comments received by the participants were as follows:

- *“eCulture was not recognised as WB priority. In this field there is readiness in Bosnia & Herzegovina, FYROM, Serbia, Croatia & potential in Albania & Montenegro (see SEED I initiative). This field as one of the major challenges in calls 5 & 6 should be recognized also as a priority of the Western Balkans besides eLearning”.*
- *“There is need for permanent communication and information related to networking and future ICT research activities in WB countries”.*
- *“Practical tutorials for proposals writing in next events would be appreciated”.*
- *“Perhaps it would be useful to organise smaller groups to discuss specific topics”.*
- *“Put more focus on the conclusions considering problems and more concrete suggestions on solving these problems”.*

5.2 Overall lessons learned

Some problems and difficulties were experienced partly due to the joint organisation of the Conference and the involvement of many partners in the process. These were evaluated and presented below as lessons learned in order to assist the organisation of future similar events.

- The support and participation of high-level policy-makers in the Conference (e.g. Ministry of Science in Serbia as well as relevant ministry representatives from Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Albania) was an important factor in the successful outcome of the event. Even more important, was the stated willingness of such policy-makers to follow-up the outcomes and recommendations of the SCORE project.
- Although the initial target of 80-100 participants seemed difficult to achieve, it was in practice surpassed, reflecting that such conferences are indeed considered useful to R&D actors in the region. The need for further such regional events was identified by a number of participants in their completed evaluation forms.
- The organisation of open multi-disciplinary panel discussions (engaging experts from academia, ICT industry and policy-makers) during the conference was welcomed by most participants, although there were some comments on the need for further structuring of such panels in order to enable more concrete outcomes. This should be considered in the organisation of future similar events.
- In general, the support to R&D organisations in Western Balkan Countries is still necessary and welcomed in order to foster their successful participation in FP7 projects. This support shall come through similar events but also local organisations appropriately created in the countries for this purpose.

ANNEX I: AGENDA OF CONFERENCE

AGENDA	Thursday, 11 December 2008
08:30-09:00	<i>Registration</i>
OPENING SESSION	
09:10-09:20	Introductory remarks (<i>Raphael Koumeri, PLANET S.A., SCORE</i>) and <i>Ulrike Kunze (PT-DLR, WBC-INCO.NET)</i>
09:20-09:30	Welcome note (<i>Mrs. Jelena Jovanovic, Secretary of IT Association, Serbian Chamber of Commerce</i>)
9:40-09:50	Inaugural speech (<i>Dr. Radosav Cerovic, Assistant Minister of Science of Serbia - (Department For Technological Development, Transfer Of Technologies And Innovation System)</i>)
KEYNOTE SPEECHES	
09:50-10:10	The EU FP7 ICT Theme (<i>Vlassios Venner – DGINFSO, European Commission</i>)
	The ICT environment in the Western Balkans (<i>Djuro Kutlaca, MPI, WBC INCO.NET</i>)
10:10-11:10	– Needs vs. capacities, common elements and particularities – Discussion
11:10-11:30	<i>Coffee Break</i>
	Regional ICT Research & Development Priorities (<i>Jelena Pantelic, Information Society SCG</i>)
11:30-12:30	– Methodological remarks; Common R&D priorities – Discussion
12:30-14:00	<i>Lunch</i>
	Key barriers and challenges in ICT Research: the Regional & EU context (<i>Soumi Papadopoulou, PLANET S.A. and René Wintjes, UNU-MERIT</i>)
14:00-15:00	– Key findings from SCORE and WBC-INCO.NET – Discussion
15:00 -15:30	<i>Coffee Break</i>
PANEL DISCUSSION	
	THE NEXT STEPS: what is needed for regional cooperation (<u>the countries' own role</u>) <i>Panel moderator: Raphael Koumeri, PLANET S.A.</i>
	– Barriers to cooperation and recommendations for Western Balkan decision-makers – The role of higher education – The role of ICT industry – The role of policy-makers
	<i>Panel members:</i>
15:30 - 17:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Jelena Surculia, Assistant Minister of Telecommunications (Serbia)</i> • <i>Tatjana Knezevic, Ministry of Education & Science (Montenegro)</i> • <i>Miroslav Radinkovic, Ministry of Science and Technology, (Republika Srpska, BiH)</i> • <i>Diana Simic, chair eSEE initiative, CeGD (Croatia)</i> • <i>Betim Cico, Polytechnic University of Tirana; (Albania)</i> • <i>Neki Frasheri, Polytechnic University of Tirana; (Albania)</i> • <i>Zlatan Sabic, University of Sarajevo; (Bosnia-Herzegovina)</i> • <i>Dragan Domazet, Dean of Faculty of Information Technology (Serbia)</i> • <i>Kiril Minoski, USAID (FYR of Macedonia)</i> • <i>Ljubomir Trajkovski, Trajkovski & Partners (FYR of Macedonia)</i>
18:00 - 20:00	<i>Cocktail</i>

Friday, 12 December 2008

09:00 - 09:20 *Morning coffee*

09:20 - 09:30 **Summary from Day 1** (*Ulrike Kunze, PT-DLR, WBC-INCO.NET*)

WHAT IS NEEDED FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION: THE EU & REGIONAL DIMENSION

Opportunities for EU-Western Balkan research collaboration:

- 09:30 - 10:00
- **the 4th ICT Call** (*Svetlana Bogdanovic, ICT/NCP for FP7, Ministry of Science, Serbia*)
 - **FP6 project example: RACWeB** (*Gordana Dzamic, Ministry of Finance, Serbia*)

10:00 - 10:30 **Development of Information Society in WBC / SEE: Contribution of neighboring & EU countries** (*Blaz Golob, CeGD, Slovenia*)

10:30 - 11:00 *Coffee break*

PANEL DISCUSSION

THE NEXT STEPS: Concrete actions & recommendations for regional cooperation (EU & regional dimension)

Panel moderator: (Ulrike Kunze, PT-DLR, WBC-INCO.NET)

- Briefing on outcomes of WBC-INCO.NET consultation session
- Inputs for calls in the context of South East European ERA.Net PLUS and FP7
- Proposal for major generic activities (etc. networking, infrastructure etc.); other

11:00 - 12:40 *Panel members:*

- *Natasa Radovic, Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Society (Serbia)*
- *Miroslav Radinkovic, Ministry of Science and Technology, (Republika Srpska, Bosnia-Herzegovina)*
- *Jozef Bushati, University of Shkodra (Albania)*
- *Leid Zejnilovic, Dzemal Bijedic University (Bosnia-Herzegovina)*
- *Vladimir Trajkovik, Faculty of Electircal Engineering & IT (FYR of Macedonia)*
- *Sokol Haxhiu, UNDP (Albania)*
- *Brano Vujicic, Association for Information Technologies in BiH (Bosnia-Herzegovina)*
- *Radovan Stojanovic, State University of Montenegro (Montenegro)*

CLOSING SESSION

12:40-12:50 **Closing note** (*Dr. Viktor Nedovic, Assistant Minister of Science of Serbia, Department For International Scientific And Technological Cooperation*)

12:50–13:00 **Presentation of the main conclusions and the way forward**
(*Raphael Koumeri, PLANET S.A., SCORE*)

13:00–14:00 *Lunch*