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CO	Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services)	X

Steering Group meeting

Sofia, 9 March 2007

The Steering Group (SG) meeting took place on 9 March 2007 in Sofia hosted by Sofia University - CIST. At the meeting participated representatives of all research mobility centres (RMC) in Bulgaria (Annex 1).

The agenda of the meeting was as follows:

1. Sustainability of the Bulgarian network of RMC after the end of the BulRMCNet project
2. Examination of the National Research Mobility Portal and the regional sites
3. Network promotion
4. Tasks under the BulRMCNet project and ERA MORE
5. Other issues

The meeting was chaired by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Roumen Nikolov, Director of CIST and co-chairman of the SG. Under the materials for the participants was also the newly issued Guide for Foreign Researchers in Bulgaria.

On the sustainability of the Bulgarian network of RMC, Assoc. Prof. Nikolov remind on the debate at the previous SG meetings and the interests shown by the regional RMCs and proposals for possible activities. In addition, he presented his view how the network could preserve its face in the future and enhance its activities. A strategic interest of all RMCs is to develop in direction industry-academia networking and development of a good regional collaboration with Greece, Romania, Turkey, and other countries in Western Balkan region, as well as to deepen the integration into EU structures.

A possible direction for future network activities is the preparation of European projects in the different regions in the country and the integration of activities with the Technology Transfer Offices (TTO), as well as the carrier centres and the IPR centres (IP points) established at the universities under different programs. Assoc. Prof. Nikolov underlined that there is a need to enhance step-by-step the RMCs competencies and activities. It is necessary to develop a self-sustainable structure and to determine its statute, its participants, its vision and objectives. In relation to the BulRMCNet project, he proposed two alternatives – to set up a new Association or to join an already established NGO with similar interests.

Karina Anguelieva stressed that the RMCs should keep their role related to human resources and to contribute for carrying out national consultations for the introduction of the European Charter and Code for Researchers. She expressed a positive attitude to the establishment of NGO.

Assoc. Prof. Nikolov made a brief overview on different processes in the EU aimed at strengthening the research potential and the role of the Structural Funds in this relation, for example in Ireland. As a possible existing structure to which RMCs could join, he proposed the recently established Institute for Technological Development (ITD), which puts together the research and applied activities. It is possible the RMCs network to have its own steering board within this Institute.

In the following discussion Prof. Barzev expressed his opinion that the ITD objectives coincide with the RMC network focus. K.Anguelieva stressed an important aspect of the future activities – to attract foreign researchers and establish a favorable environment for the industry-academia mobility. Subsequently, she stressed that it is necessary to use the EU

programs much better. It was pointed out that the different public bodies have established a variety of centers at the universities which cease to exist after the finances stop. In the case of RMCs this should be avoided. Their establishment is based on a mechanism for future sustainability through integration into other university bodies, however, the present task is to keep the network as a whole and their regional role.

As main priorities for the future RMC activities were decided the following:

1. Human resources development in research
2. Networking with industry

In relation to the participation in EU programs, was raised the issue for the low rates for Bulgarian researchers in the Life-long Learning Program, which are 3 times lower than those in Romania. This does not stimulate researchers participation and the SG could make a concrete proposal to the Ministry.

Assoc. Prof. Violeta Tsekova expressed her vision on the network future, while underlining her belief that its activities are very useful and should be preserved and enhanced in new directions. She was in favor of keeping the coordinating role of SU-CIST and look for support by the university rectors for the future of the RMCs. There is also a need for support by the Ministry of Education and Science (MES), as well as under European programs. In Bulgaria exist more than 1500 NGOs, and the start-up phases of a new body needs start-up capital and support by the rectors. Therefore, Assoc. Prof. Tsekova proposed to be established another type of structure – a civil alliance in which could participate also MES, the Ministry of Economy and Energy. This idea was appreciated by the meeting participants.

As a result of the debates, it was decided to carry out a virtual discussion and to prepare the profile of the future structure on the bases of the proposals made by the RMCs. The objective is by mid April to decide upon the future structure and its activities in order to launch it before the project end.

On the second point of the agenda Elissaveta Gourova pointed out the need for internal evaluation of the National Research Mobility Portal and the regional sites. Subsequently, SU-CIST will prepare questionnaires on the bases of ERA MORE recent practice, which will be used for evaluation by an Expert Group which will consist of one representative of each RMC and 3-4 external experts. It was decided to include in the Expert Group Ms Zdravka Giozlieva and Mr. Rossen Simeonov from the SG. The Expert Group will carry out its evaluation by the end of March and prepare directions for the improvement of the Portal and the regional sites, as well as their promotion. Ms Gourova stressed, in particular, the need all institutions to place on their sites the ERA MORE logo and a link to the Mobility Portal.

On the fourth point of the agenda Ms Gourova presented the Plan for the BulRMCNet project activities and within ERA MORE by the end of 2007 (Annex 2). She stressed the need to carry out the training seminars earlier in order to combine them with information days on People program of FP7. E.Gourova proposed to join two project activities – the focal points training with the RMC presentation at regional level. Therefore, at all regional seminars will participate at least one representative of each RMC. In relation with the training topics, it was proposed to include IPR and the labor issues as possible topics. Ms Giozlieva proposed to include also representatives of the IP points in Rousse and in Varna.

Assoc. Prof. Tsakova proposed during the seminars to carry out a survey on academia-industry linkages. The survey results will be presented at the seminar which the RMC-Sofia will organize at the end of May or in June.

At the meeting were taken the following decisions:

1. All RMCs to present their views on the new structure for the network and its activities by 23 March.
2. SU-CIST to prepare a project for establishment of the structure and to circulate it for consideration by 16 April.
3. To carry out training seminars at regional level on 29 March in Stara Zagora, on 4 April in Varna and on 5 April in Rousse. The program of the seminars will include three parts – training on topics of interest of the RMCs, presentation of all RMCs and the Mobility Portal, information session on FP7 program People.
4. On 29 March to take place a meeting of the Expert Group for Portal and regional sites evaluation.
5. The next meeting of the SG will be carried out in June-July before the project end.