

## Joint Press Release

Austrian Academy of Sciences  
German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina

July 4<sup>th</sup> 2016

# Western Balkans: Setting the course for tomorrow's science

The "Joint Science Conference" of the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina and the Austrian Academy of Sciences (OeAW) releases recommendations for the development of the science systems in South East Europe preceding the "3<sup>rd</sup> Western Balkans Summit" of the heads of state and government in Paris. For science and research to become internationally competitive, Western Balkans countries need to strengthen university autonomy, ensure independent research funding and create National Science Advisory Councils to improve the communication between science, politics, society and economy. These are central recommendations of scientists and decision-makers from 13 European countries addressed to the heads of state and government and the European Commission, who meet at the "3<sup>rd</sup> Western Balkans Summit" in Paris on July 4<sup>th</sup>.

Applying international quality criteria to science and research is also crucial, as well as creating future prospects for young, excellent scientists and expanding possibilities of international mobility on all career levels. Thereby, in the long run, the current trend of "brain drain" (the emigration of qualified scientists abroad) could be reduced and "brain circulation" (temporary stay abroad with a return to the home country) achieved.

The aim of these and further measures that have been published in a "Joint Statement" is to strengthen – in the next years – the science systems of the Western Balkans countries for the international and European Research Area. On a political level, this will support the rapprochement between the region and the EU and deepen the integration of those countries that are already EU member states.

The participants of the Joint Science Conference in Vienna came from Austria and Germany, Bulgaria, France and Italy, the Western Balkans countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, as well as the EU member states Croatia and Slovenia. The conference was hosted in the frame of the Western Balkans / Berlin Process initiated by German Chancellor Angela Merkel at the OeAW from 22-24 May 2016. This "2<sup>nd</sup> Joint Science Conference" followed the inaugural conference in Berlin and Halle, Germany in 2015.

The recommendations will be fed into the consultations of the heads of state and government during the "3<sup>rd</sup> Western Balkans Summit" in Paris on 4 July 2016. The next meeting of the Joint Science Conference will be organised together with the French Académie des sciences in France. The conference series will be continued thereafter.

The Joint Statement entitled *Moving Forward: Guidelines to Improved Science Systems* of the Joint Science Conference is available at: <http://bit.do/2JSC-WBP>.

Press images of the Joint Science Conference in Vienna can be downloaded free of charge: <http://www.oeaw.ac.at/pr/wbc>.  
More information is available on the website of the Joint Science Conference of the Western Balkans  
Process: [www.leopoldina.org/en/jsc](http://www.leopoldina.org/en/jsc).

The Joint Science Conference in Vienna was organised by the OeAW and the Leopoldina in cooperation with the Austrian Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs, the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy, the German Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation, in the frame of its programme named Perform.

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