

## **Press release**

### **The European Workshop RIS3 - Biotechnology in Europe (co-organized by ICARST) has ended**

On September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2017, the European Workshop “Smart Specialization Strategy (RIS3) in the Field of Biotechnologies in Europe: A Challenge for CEE Region”, which was organized by the Faculty of Natural Sciences of the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava in cooperation with ICARST Bratislava and the Slovak Academy of Sciences under the patronage of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic. The workshop was supported financially and organizationally by JRC-EC (Joint Research Center European Commission, Brussels, Belgium, Italy), CEI (Central European Initiative, Trieste, Italy) and ICGEB (International Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology, Trieste, Italy).

The event was as follow-up of the previous workshop (ABBE 2015 – [www.abbe2015.eu](http://www.abbe2015.eu)) and was attended by more than 100 experts from 22 European countries and international organizations (JRC-EC, ICGEB, CEI). The workshop reviewed current trends as well as prospects for research, innovation, technology and industrial production in the field of biotechnology and bioeconomics, as well as the implementation of the RIS3 strategy. Emphasis has also been put on the development of international cooperation with the specificity of the Central and Eastern European region. Presented papers and the discussion pointed-out a high level of research in several areas of biotechnology in CEE countries, including Slovakia (industrial biotechnology, agro-food biotechnology, medicinal biotechnology) but also to problems in the area. A serious problem is the lack of implementation of RIS3 Action Plans in countries in the CEE region (including Slovakia), insufficient transnational cooperation, and also a weak link between research, innovation and high-tech industrial companies. In Slovakia, there is inertia in the overwhelming preference of the automotive industry, as well as the chaos in the evaluation, as well as the selection of large programs within the Operational Program in the framework of Structural EU Funds (OPVaI).

Finally, a series of suggestions and recommendations were adopted:

1. To intensify international initiatives and linking centers in the fields of Biotechnology, Bio-Economics and Biomedicine, to develop integrated programs on a platform that includes a number of cross-cutting programs (linking research, innovation and industry). There is also a need to increase involvement of CEE countries (especially Slovakia) in the European Union's programs (Horizon 2020, BBI - Bio-based Industries, Central Europe - Interreg, ICGEB programs, CEI, Danube region initiative, ...). A number of specific project themes have been suggested during the discussion.

2. A recommendation was made for Slovakia to organize a similar event (a follow-up Workshop) at least once every two years, providing a platform for the preparation and implementation of Biotech Research and Innovation Transversal Programs, including the European Framework Programs (EC FP 9), for the period 2021-2027. Several international organizations, in particular CEI, JRC-EC, ICGEB, have shown a particular interest in supporting such follow-up activities in Slovakia with the CEE region.
3. Encourage the establishment of BT Cluster for Biotechnology, which could integrate research, technology development, innovation and innovative industrial production in Slovakia and CEE countries. Such a cluster should serve to integrate biotechnology activities but also stimulate regional and European cooperation between 2021 and 2027.

Cluster in Slovakia, with the support of the EC, JRC and CEI, can be transformed into a Competence Center for the whole of Central and Eastern Europe with direct links to important centers of similar type in Europe (Germany, the Netherlands and Italy).

More detailed results and recommendations are available on the RIS3 - Biotechnology workshop website (<http://www.ris3-eu-biotech-workshop-2017.eu/>).

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