



A Large-Scale International Research Facility for South East Europe

Due to the recent history in South East Europe all scientific activities very much slowed down. As a consequence, this region has suffered ever since from strong brain drain of the young generation, affecting in particular the best. However, in the past the same region had an intensive technological development and made significant scientific contributions on a European scale. For example, the Vinca Institute in Serbia recently celebrated its 70th anniversary. To recover this tradition and to decrease the present large gap compared to the rest of Europe, it is necessary to establish a new large-scale internationally competitive research infrastructure in South East Europe.

Such a project was first discussed by Prof. Herwig Schopper, former Director General of CERN¹⁾ and initiator of the international SESAME²⁾ project in Jordan, at a WAAS³⁾ meeting in Dubrovnik at the end of 2016. In my capacity as Minister of Science of Montenegro, I got strongly engaged in leading the process to establish a South East European International Institute for Sustainable Technologies (SEEIIST). An important step on the political scene was a signature of a 'Declaration of Intent' at the Ministerial meeting at CERN on 25 October 2017. It marked the start of the SEEIIST as a Regional Project with two objectives: to promote the collaboration between science, technology and industry and to improve the relations between the countries, following the CERN model of 'Science for Peace'. The eight parties signing the declaration were Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Kosovo*, the FYR of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia, with Croatia and Greece taking an observer status.

Originally there were two options for the SEEIIST Project: a state-of-the-art 'Facility for Tumour Therapy and Biomedical Research with Protons and Heavier Ions' and a '4th Generation Synchrotron Light Source'. The Concept Studies for both were prepared by international expert committees and were presented for the first time to the public at the Scientific Forum at the ICTP/Trieste in January 2018. More than 100 participants attended the Forum, among them representatives of the EC who expressed support for the forthcoming preparatory phase of the project under the condition to set priority on one of them. The selection was made by a unanimous vote of the SEEIIST Intergovernmental Steering Committee in favour of the first option. Europe needs to further advance ion tumour therapy.

The SEEIIST project is extremely important for the future development of the region of South East Europe. It will be a unique platform for the education of young scientists and a unique centre of excellence that would make the countries of the region competitive to the rest of Europe.

¹⁾ Created under the auspices of UNESCO in 1954, CERN (Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire) located at the Franco-Swiss border near Geneva, was one of Europe's first joint ventures and hosts today around 11'000 scientific users from all over the world, pursuing their research work in the field of particle physics.

²⁾ SESAME (Synchrotron-Light for Experimental Science and Applications in the Middle East) is a laboratory located in Jordan, created under the auspices of UNESCO in May 2002. It involves countries from the Middle East in a very successful scientific collaboration.

³⁾ The World Academy of Art and Science (WAAS) is composed of 730 individual Fellows from diverse cultures, nationalities, and intellectual disciplines, chosen for eminence in art, the natural and social sciences, and the humanities.

*) This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSC 1244/1999 and the ICJ opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence

Dr. Sanja Damjanović has a PhD in physics and is since 2016 Minister of Science in Montenegro. She proposed to establish a new international institute in the region of the Western Balkans to develop sustainable technologies based on an integrated view of economic, cultural and social aspects.