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PRESENTATION OF BEST PRACTICE CASES IN HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT AND MIGRATION MANAGEMENT

Unity through Knowledge Fund, Croatia

By Croatian Ministry of Science

The Unity through Knowledge Fund has been created by the Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports with the aim to use potential and establish cooperation between the Croatian scientific and professional Diaspora. The Fund is financing collaborative research projects and knowledge-based business activities of expatriates and Croatian researchers, institutions and companies.

Objectives and vision

Unity through Knowledge Fund accomplishes its mission through following goals:

- **Supporting research that is competitive on international level:** The Fund encourages basic and applied scientific research that creates new knowledge and exhibits potential to compete on an international level. Two project types are financed: those that attract experts and investments from Diaspora into Croatia and those that enable the cooperation with leading of European and other international projects.
- **Fostering research that creates new values in Croatian economy:** The Fund supports projects that directly and indirectly strengthen the Croatian economy. Support is given to the investments made by the business sector into scientific projects. With the use of the resources of scientific and professional Diaspora, companies that apply new knowledge are supported.
- **Supporting projects that help the development of research infrastructure in Croatia.**

The Fund supports all initiatives that contribute to the development of scientific system in Croatia through the cooperation with Diaspora, which results in international competitiveness of Croatia, to make Croatia a desirable place for top scientists from abroad (including those from Diaspora).



Resources available

With 3 full time personnel, we have committed for various projects-1.9 mil EUR in 2007 and 1.5 mil EUR in 2008. Funding capital is 5 mil euro.

Main problems and obstacles

The biggest challenge at the beginning was the insufficient involvement of the Diaspora and lack of quality projects for financing. Through well planned and low cost promotional activities after publishing calls for proposals or in occasion of any relevant event, we managed to increase initial interest. Afterwards with transparent and public decision-making the interest of the target groups became very high.

Performance and main achievements:

In total we have received 237 project applications for various programs requesting 22.243.000,00 EUR., but due to limited funds we are currently financing within Cooperability Program 17 projects with total value of 2.868.607 EUR, within Young Scientists Program- 11 projects with total value of 567.618, EUR and within Connectivity Program-12 projects of total value of 81.823 EU.

We encourage the expatriate top experts and scientists to return or to initiate projects “at home” in cooperation with their homeland colleagues, with a focus on our young scientists. Curently, we have developed 3 programs :

Research Cooperability Program is a research support program that finances medium-scale collaborative research projects in Croatia, aiming to attract promising research projects to Croatian companies and institutions together with their international/private financing, knowledge, technology and potential research results.

Young Researchers and Professionals Program fosters young researchers and professionals both from Croatia and diaspora within all aspects of their professional advancement and is committed to support “brain-gain” to Croatian innovative SME’s, universities and research institutions.

Connectivity Program offers two grants; the “**Gaining Experience**” **Grant** offers opportunities for outstanding young scientists and professionals from Croatia to visit the excellent research and development facilities abroad and establish cooperation and/or acquire new skills. And “**Homeland Visit**” **Grant** offers opportunities for outstanding researchers and experts of Croatian origin living abroad to visit Croatian knowledge-based company, R&D organization or public institution to contribute to cooperation and provide knowledge transfer to Croatia to advance science and technology.

Why it is a success story?

The goal of the Fund is to encourage cooperation with Croatian researchers and experts living and working abroad and to finance joint science and technology projects of Croatian researchers and experts working abroad and researchers, institutions and companies based in Croatia. These are unique projects as this is the first case in the Republic of Croatia of direct co-financing of joint cooperation of researchers working at Croatian universities,

institutes, and small and medium-sized enterprises with researchers of Croatian origin working for international research institutions. The proposals are selected on very competitive basis mostly with the help of foreign evaluators (to avoid conflict of interest) – renowned experts in their respective fields the two thirds and of two independent commissions involving prominent Croatian scientists and experts as well as the private sector representatives.

This represents a new breakthrough made by the Fund in financing scientific and R&D research as the selection procedure is conducted in a competitive and open manner. Final approval rate (the ratio between approved and submitted proposals) for all programs is around 14 %, which guarantees a high quality of the selected project and is in line with the approval rate for similar research financing calls in Europe. Our projects have launched top-level scientific and technological research within Croatian institutions and attracted investments from international funds and the business sector. They also contribute, with the help of the Diaspora, to technology and knowledge transfer as well as to achievement of valuable scientific results in Croatia. Transparent and public decision-making and financing resulted in the increased collaboration between Croatian scientific Diaspora and researchers from the country through 20 projects concluded. In addition, we are financing 20 projects of Young researchers, which range from technology-oriented, applicative research projects to goal-oriented basic research projects.. Total value of UKF projects is **3.516.504 EUR**. These projects attracted the matching funds by Croatian industry, foreign research and development institutions, and international research funds (FP7), in total value of **700.000 EUR-a**. In two last years, 5 top-performing scientists permanently returned to Croatia and have taken posts in Croatia's R&D institutions as a result of collaboration through UKF funding,

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