

Foreword

It was with great pleasure that I accepted the invitation to write a Foreword to this volume stemming from the two important events on European mobility issues held in 2004 under the auspices of the Marie Curie Fellowship Association and a number of like-minded organizations active in the field.

The UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science in Europe, which I have the honour of heading, has, as its prime task, the furtherance of international cooperation and capacity building in the natural sciences in Central and Eastern Europe, and particularly – over the last few years – in South-Eastern Europe. Our current programme is pursued within the framework of the Organization's follow-up to the World Conference on Science (Budapest 1999), which UNESCO sponsored. That Conference served to underline, through its final documents, the absolute importance of the free and unhindered circulation of scientists, and the need for the involving young researchers in any decision-making likely to have impact on their future careers. We ourselves had very soon realized that any programme that sought to assist in the building of national and regional capabilities in science and technology had, as a priority, to address issues concerning the mobilization of scientists – and especially young scientists.

Europe is an exceptionally diverse region, and in order to take best advantage of that most precious of all its assets, its human capital, we have to ensure that individuals from all parts of the European Research Area are involved and are able to bring their own contribution to the scientific enterprise.

Science is an international endeavour; happily, it has always been that way. Progress in science has always been brought about through interchange of ideas and methodologies. The free circulation of information and people is central to this process, and this movement allows the scientific community to grow, to extend and to develop itself. The facilitation of these processes is therefore close to the heart of numerous organizations – UNESCO included.

A significant part of ROSTE's annual programme is, in reality, concerned with support for the short-term mobility of scientists from South East Europe, enabling them to attend and actively participate in a wide range of conferences, workshops, training courses and Summer schools in the basic and applied sciences held within the region.

This is not the place to catalogue all the activities – or the credentials if you like – of ROSTE in the area of mobility. However, perhaps I can describe some of our more significant initiatives in this regard, underlining as they do the Office's commitment to greater and more even-handed mobility opportunities within the region.

Underlying what we do in favour of the young scientific community is a conviction that all national scientific communities within Europe, and those individuals making them up, should be assisted to play a part as equals in the scientific life of the region: to help create a level playing field, and one that has no inbuilt restrictions or obstacles. As but one example, let me recall that ROSTE intermediated the signature by SE European countries of the Quality Charter with a view to their inclusion within the Pan-European Researchers Mobility Portal created by the European Commission.

One cannot speak of mobility without making some reference to one of the persistent scourges of South East Europe: brain drain, the one-way mobility route for many a young talent from the region. The Office has sought to pilot solutions for providing better work conditions for scientists in South East Europe in order to alleviate brain drain in the region, in cooperation with a private sector partner, Hewlett-Packard. Entitled "Piloting Solutions for Alleviating Brain Drain in South East Europe", the initiative has involved seven beneficiary universities from five Balkan countries. The joint project is part of UNESCO's Strategy for Strengthening Cooperation within South East Europe and one of the priorities of its programme in higher education. Its objective is to enable scientists from the region to interact with the international scientific community around the world, and especially their fellow nationals who have left to work abroad, by harnessing the power of grid computing. Through this pilot project UNESCO and HP intend to demonstrate how technology can contribute to scientific cooperation and turn brain-drain into brain-gain.

Last, but by no means least, ROSTE has also provided support to young scientists from Central and SE European countries to enable them to participate in major European events and projects related to the career of researchers. Thus, we enabled 24 young scientists to participate in the European conference 'Early Stage Researcher Mobility in Europe - Meeting the Challenges and Promoting Best Practice' held in Lisbon, Portugal on 25-27 February 2004 which set itself the task of promoting good practice at all levels regarding the facilitation of mobility of young researchers, especially during PhD training, and providing a forum for the exchange of experience and discussions on how to overcome existing obstacles. This volume, which stems directly from the Portugal event, via the workshops held in the framework of the Euroscience Open Forum 2004 in Stockholm in August of that year (which we were also pleased to be able to support), bears witness to the success of that objective.

I congratulate the organizers of those events, and the editors of this proceedings volume, for having brought together such a variety of presentations and reports on national situations. The book will, I feel sure, prove to be an invaluable source of information for all those with an interest in furthering the movement of scientific talent within the European research area taken in its widest sense.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'H' followed by a cursive 'M' and a long, sweeping horizontal stroke.

Howard Moore
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Regional Bureau for Science in Europe (ROSTE)