



EUROPEAN PHYSICAL SOCIETY



**Report of the round table “European Integration – Widening Participation”
at 11th International Conference of the Balkan Physical Union (BPU11), Belgrade, Serbia**

Rationale

The Widening Participation and Spreading Excellence actions under Horizon Europe, aim at building research and innovation (R&I) capacity for countries lagging in these fields. These actions aspire to strengthen the R&I systems by promoting scientific collaboration, mobility programmes, international networking and counteracting the "brain drain" from the EU-15 countries

Within this context, on August 29th, the EPS organised in the framework of BPU11 a round table dedicated to the “Widening Participation and European Integration” with the spirit of gathering inputs from the relevant stakeholders. The event aimed at facilitating an open discussion among the participants in order to propose realistic and practical ideas for tackling the inequalities between EU-12 and EU-15¹ R&I systems, with particular focus on the Balkan area and ultimately inspire future actions for enhancing the widening participation actions.

The round table

The round table, moderated by Dr. Enrique Sanchez-Bautista (EPS) and Prof. Dr. Radu Constantinescu (University of Craiova, Romania) counted on the participation of key note speakers such as Dr. Alessandro Lombardo (Central European Initiative, Italy), Prof. Dr. Denes Lajos Nagy (EPS-CEI, Hungary), Prof. Dr. Mara Scepanovic (University of Montenegro, Montenegro), Dr. Nikola Petrov (Rozhen Observatory, Bulgaria), Prof. Dr. Gertrud Zwicknagl (Technische Universität Braunschweig, Germany) and panellists such as Dr. Armela Dino (Ministry of Science and Innovation, Spain), Ms. Sylwia Kostka (National Science Centre, Poland), Dr. Karin Zach (German Physical Society, Germany) and Prof. Dr. Yasser Omar (Technical University of Lisbon, Portugal), who engaged an fruitful open discussion with the audience.

Conclusion

Although there is a strong consensus around the importance of bridging the research and innovation gap between the EU-15 countries and although the EU has enacted a variety of programmes and actions within this goal, there is a general feeling that these programmes suffer from their complexity and lack of visibility; moreover, more decisive actions must be considered. It became clear that the European Research and Innovation Framework Programmes alone are not enough; There is a strong need for comprehensive European integration in terms of supporting international cooperation and facilitating national determination at all levels to successfully achieve the widening participation goals.

¹ REGULATION (EU) 2021/695 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 28 April 2021 establishing Horizon Europe Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, Article 2(17): [Publications Office \(europa.eu\)](https://publications.office.europa.eu)