



## Conclusions from the Conference "Unity through knowledge -working together to strengthen Croatia's competitiveness"

1. In the Republic of Croatia around 1.1 million people are employed in the real sector yet only 0.85 % of GDP is invested in science. The Croatian Employers' Association pointed out that the share of GDP invested in science could not be higher. As such, it was more a question of how to distribute these funds more efficiently. Therefore the Croatian Employers' Association suggested investing in projects relevant to the business sector as well as in those creating added values for Croatian society in general. Croatia needs Foundations like the "Unity through knowledge Fund", which supported scientific research groups to become more competitive internationally. This was done by gaining new knowledge and skills to be able to participate in international calls for proposals and to attract international funding. Newly acquired knowledge and skills as well as new networks established with prominent international public and scientific institutions enabled scientific groups through the "Unity through knowledge Fund's" projects to be more competitive and have better capacity for attracting funds from European and other international sources of funding, especially within EU Seventh Framework Program for research and technology development (FP7). Since the Republic of Croatia contributes funds to the FP7 Program, it is very important that Croatian scientists be financed by this Program.
2. The Ministry of Science, Education and Sports Budget funds are currently insufficient to be invested into scientific projects since major funds are needed for maintenance of the institutional system. Hence, all institutions and scientists should use the given funds responsibly and great care should be taken so that only the projects which are proposed by quality researchers and show great potential of being applicable and useful to the Croatian economy and society as a whole are awarded.
3. The recognized success of the Unity through knowledge fund is the establishment of a system of cooperation between Croatian scientists and the international scientists and their institutions. This enabled the significant transfer of knowledge and technologies into the Croatian scientific and economic sector. The knowledge and technologies are crucial for further development of Croatian innovative potential and thus for a more competitive economy. Also, intersectoral collaboration was facilitated through the Fund's activities. As it was discussed at the Conference Panel, the UKF Fund should be a matchmaker between science, knowledge and innovations on one side, and economy and society as a whole on the other side. The Fund's programs contributed to the knowledge transfer and young scientists career development who would in the future undertake leading positions in Croatian and international scientific community and also in the economic sector. Contribution to capacity building and to development of research infrastructure is among the most important benefits of the UKF programs.
4. Representatives of the scientific community and the economic sector agreed that the intention of the Unity through knowledge Fund was not to be competitive but rather complementary with other similar funds since Croatia needs not only funds that will foster internationally competitive research, but also a broad field of research should be eligible for financing. Conference participants share the common opinion that investing in science is not just an expense but rather an investment in the future of Croatia and that the efforts should be made to enable the continuation of the UKF fund activities. Since Croatia will not have opportunity to use the EU structural funds soon, we must find some other source of



financing. In this respect, one of the proposals was applying for a new World Bank Loan. Nowadays when economic development of the country depends on knowledge, development infrastructure, high technology and innovations, it is necessary that the scientific and economic community strive together towards the common goal of a more competitive Croatia.

5. It is concluded that although the STP project was closing as of May 31, 2011 the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports would set all the necessary measures in order to enable the continuation of the Unity through knowledge Fund -activities .