

Activity Report on the implementation of the ERI SEE Work Programme 2010 in the period January – June 2010

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1. Introduction

The year 2010 has been marked with efforts at political, organisational and content level for moving the Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE) to a higher developmental stage. The transformation process takes place in the year of strengthened EU enlargement policy¹ and the increased regional ownership of the SEE cooperation under the leadership of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). The region has recognised that the economic downturn calls for stronger regional partnerships, innovative networking and close cooperation in developing human capital². In line with the commitment of the region to the European strategic objectives, the objectives of education and training in SEE will be adjusted to the objectives laid down with the strategic framework "Education and Training 2020" (ET 2010)³ for ensuring a strong role of education and training in the post-2010 Lisbon Strategy.

The successful networking and regional cooperation in the development and implementation of lifelong learning strategies, national qualifications frameworks, quality and equity in education, and in the integration of education, research and innovation in a functioning knowledge triangle have called for further strengthening and lobbying for ERI SEE as a regional platform which aligns itself to the instruments for exchange of experience within the EU (clusters of knowledge, peer-learning etc.) and supports capacity building for increased use of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) & the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Policy Instrument (ENPI) for education and training reforms, as well as for participation of its' members into the EU programmes for external cooperation in education and training, including gradual involvement into the Lifelong Learning Programme. This in particular in light of the Strategy "Europe 2020" and the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training "ET 2020".

This report presents the activities for implementation of the ERI SEE Work Programme 2010 in the period January-June 2010. The activities were implemented by joint efforts and work of the Chair of the ERI SEE Governing Board, the members of the Chairmanship and the Governing Board, the ERI SEE Agency, policy makers and experts from the RCC, the ERI SEE members and the members of the Consultative Body.

The on-going "ERI SEE development process" is driven by the strong leadership of the Chair of the ERI SEE Governing Board Dr. Radovan Fuchs and the Co-Chairs. In the first half of 2010, the process addressed the renewal of the political commitment, paved the way to the transformation of ERI SEE into an international organisation, contributed to the adjustment of the thematic areas & instruments and supported the efforts for widening the sources of funding of ERI SEE. The RCC closely follows and supports the development process by providing expertise and enabling knowledge sharing.

The Report is organised around the transformation and development actions and the five ERI SEE outputs for the period 2008-2010, as agreed by the Governing Board in 2008.

¹ "Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2009-2010", Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, 14 October 2009

² Bucharest Conference on Fostering and Building Human Capital for Sustainable Knowledge Societies in South Eastern Europe (March 2009).

³ Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ('ET 2020'), Official Journal of the European Union (2009/C 119/02).

2. ERI SEE DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS

The year 2010 is characterised with the process of transformation of ERI SEE aiming at articulation of the commitment of its members to regional ownership and provision of a sustainable organisational structure with capacity to become a recognised and attractive partner in EU funded projects with regional character.

Key drivers of the transformation process are the Chair of the ERI SEE Governing Board and the ERI SEE Chairmanship in cooperation with the RCC Secretariat, including the active involvement of its' Legal Advisor in different phases of the process.

2.1. Development of ERI SEE into an international organisation

The legal structure of the ERI SEE Secretariat as a national public institution of the Republic of Croatia hindered the implementation of the full scope of cooperation, including a stronger and more balanced co-financing of ERI SEE by its' members. By hosting the Secretariat since 2004, Croatia has played this role beyond the originally foreseen period and has substantially co-financed ERI SEE. The transformation of the ERI SEE Secretariat into an international organisation establishes the legal basis for a sustainable, regionally owned and co-financed structure under the auspices of the RCC.

Activities implemented:

2.1.1. Commitment of ERI SEE members to enter a process of transformation of the ERI SEE into an international organisation

The Chair of the Governing Board initiated a consultation process with an explanatory letter requesting the ERI SEE members to provide national feedback on their readiness to enter a process of transformation of ERI SEE into an international organisation. The positive feedback of the majority of ERI SEE members paved the way to the transformation process.

December 2009 - January 2010

2.1.2. Transformation of ERI SEE into an international organisation

Based upon the commitment of the ERI SEE members to enter into a transformation process, the following activities were completed in the first half of 2010:

1. The ERI SEE Governing Board adopted the decision to launch a transformation process.
2. A new Memorandum of Understanding on the Role and Organisation of the Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE) (MoU) was drafted and negotiated with the stakeholders.
3. The MoU was signed by five SEE Ministers responsible for education, the RCC and the TFBHC as a side event to the 23rd Session of the Council of Europe Standing Conference of Ministers of Education (Brdo, Slovenia, 5 June).

2.1.3. Rotation of the seat of the ERI SEE Secretariat in 2010

By hosting the Secretariat since 2004, Croatia has played this role beyond the originally foreseen period and has substantially co-financed ERI SEE. Given the regional dimension of the Initiative and the concept of a rotating seat, the potential interest of ERI SEE members to host the ERI SEE Secretariat was solicited at the beginning of 2010.

On 4 June 2010, the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted the proposal of the Ministry of Education for expression of interest for hosting the ERI SEE Secretariat from 1 January 2011 and entitled the State Secretary of the Ministry to officially present the interest at the signing ceremony of the MoU (Brdo, Slovenia, 5 June 2010).

2.2. Adjustment of the thematic areas and instruments

Activities implemented:

2.2.1. Establishment of clusters of knowledge in two thematic areas relevant for SEE cooperation in education and training

Aiming to shape the regional cooperation in accordance with the diversified needs of the countries for mutual learning, regional exchange of experience & good practice and for encompassing the specific phases of national reforms in education and training, the ERI SEE Secretariat and the TFBHC Secretariat will closely cooperate in the introduction of clusters of knowledge (CK) as a new instrument for cooperation⁴. This instrument, developed under the "Education and Training 2010" work programme, has brought to positive experience and praxis in the EU. CKs will support the exchange of information on different policy options, which, in addition to other activities for mutual learning, will help the advancement of the reforms of the national education systems. The peer learning activities will be organised around CKs involving different SEE countries, other European countries and other institutions/organisations interested for cooperation in specific thematic areas.

In the first half of 2010, the list of topics relevant for cooperation in CKs was updated (Annex 1). The shared common topics of interest were grouped in four potential clusters for regional cooperation:

- *Lifelong learning*, with the following topics: VET development and links with the labour market, VET quality assurance bodies; post-secondary VET, entrepreneurial learning, adult education.
- *Qualifications Frameworks*, with the following topics: NQF development with attention to non-formal and informal learning, NQF development and references to the EQF, recognition of diplomas and cooperation among the ENIC/NARIC centres, Europass, links between higher education and VET.
- *Quality and equity in education*, with the following topics: quality assurance at all levels of education, equity in education, governance and efficiency in education, the role of teachers in ensuring quality and equity in education.
- *Cluster on the "knowledge triangle"*, with the following topics: change management; modernisation and development of higher education, the Bologna process and the role of the universities in the process of forward thinking; learning regions and evidence based policy making.

The extension of invitation to the ERI SEE members for expression of interest for undertaking the role of a leading country for a particular cluster was postponed until the identification of an interim structure which will undertake the responsibility for implementation of the ERI SEE activities in 2010. This was due to the fact that an agreement for the establishment of the clusters, development and implementation of a workprogramme for 2010 was to be signed with each leading country. Being in a process of ceasing its' work, the ERI SEE Agency was not in a position to enter into a process of negotiation and signing agreements with different partner institutions.

⁴ Zagreb Plan for Action 2009-2010, Task Force Fostering & Building Human Capital of the Regional Cooperation Council, June 2009

2.2.2. Continuation of the support to the networking of the newly established national institutions in different areas of education and training in SEE

Ever since 2006, ERI SEE has continuously supported the regional cooperation through networking of the newly established national structures in different areas of education and training in SEE (the network of SEE VET institutions – SEEVET.Net, the network of centres for external evaluation in pre-university education, as well as the centres for quality assurance and accreditation in higher education). The networking will be sustained by organization of networking events in each of the three areas in the second half of 2010.

More information about the events is provided under chapter 3 of this document (3.1.1, 3.3.1 and 3.4.2).

2.3. Resources

Activities implemented:

2.3.1. Forecast of the contribution of the ERI SEE members to the Initiative

Having in view that ERI SEE is a regional initiative under the auspices of the RCC, the forecast of the contribution of its' members (operational costs and total costs) was prepared in accordance with the methodology developed for contributions to the RCC. The Legal Advisor of the RCC Secretariat supported the preparation of the forecast. The forecast was based upon the level of gross domestic product at purchasing power parity of the SEE countries. It also encompassed the contributions of the donors and the contribution of the future host country to the operational costs, in addition to its' annual contribution. The document was annexed to the first draft of the MoU and was subject to discussions and revisions in different phases of preparation of the final version of the MoU.

January 2010

2.3.2. Survey on the possibilities for ERI SEE involvement in EU funded projects

Commissioned by the ERI SEE Agency, the education expert Drs. Ton Farla from The Netherlands prepared the Review on Funding Options for ERI SEE under IPA - the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance, TAIEX - the Technical Assistance and Information Exchange Instrument of the Directorate General for Enlargement of the European Commission and Tempus – the Programme Supporting the Modernisation of Higher Education in the Partner Countries. The Review was prepared in March and presented at the 12th meeting of the ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body (Zagreb, Croatia, 8-9 April 2010).

In support to the actual discussion for diversification of ERI SEE funding, the Review presents the strategic objectives of the instruments, the specific action lines, the ERI SEE eligibility for funding, the guidelines & administrative procedures for obtaining Community based funding and provides numerous references & relevant web links.

2.4. Renewal of the Political Commitment

Activities implemented:

2.4.1. Agreement of the SEE Ministers responsible for education on renewal of the political commitment for regional cooperation in education and training

Upon initiative of the Chair of the ERI SEE Governing Board, the readiness of the ERI SEE members for renewal of the political commitment by agreeing a new Memorandum of Understanding on the Role and Organisation of the Education Reform Initiative of

South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE) (MoU) was solicited. The letter of the Chair to the SEE Ministers was supported with a strategic document describing the added value provided by ERI SEE to the efforts of the region to develop human capital necessary for meeting the numerous socio-economic, demographic, technological and environmental challenges. The strategic document was prepared by the ERI SEE Agency.

January - February 2010

2.4.2. Drafting of the MoU

The initial draft of the MoU was prepared by the Chair and the Co-Chairs of the ERI SEE Governing Board in cooperation with the RCC Secretariat. It was subject to a one day drafting session with participation of representatives of all interested Ministries, the TFBHC and experts from the RCC Secretariat. The RCC Secretariat hosted the drafting session which took place in Sarajevo on 8 March 2010. Total of 16 officials from the RCC Secretariat (including the Legal Advisor), the ERI SEE Chairmanship, the ERI SEE members: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia, the TFBHC, as well as Consultative Body representatives from Austria, The Netherlands and the Council of Europe contributed to the preparation of the updated draft MoU.

The draft MoU acknowledged the developments both at European level and in SEE relevant for the changed context of the regional cooperation in education and training and affirmed the commitment of the signatories to strengthen and broaden the cooperation in the framework of ERI SEE. In annexes, the draft MoU provided the principles of institutional framework of ERI SEE, the basic requirements for proposal for the seat of the ERI SEE Secretariat and a provisional budget outlook for 2011.

The document was circulated to the ERI SEE members and the Consultative Body for internal discussions and suggestions for improvement of the text.

February-March 2010

*Joint Document drafting session hosted by the RCC Secretariat,
Sarajevo, 8 March 2010*

2.4.3. Finalisation of the draft MoU and adoption of the finalised draft by the members of the ERI SEE Governing Board

Based upon the inputs from the internal discussions and the suggestions for improvement, an updated version of the draft MoU was prepared and communicated to the members of the Governing Board as input for the special session of the 12th meeting of the ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body for finalisation of the draft MoU (Zagreb, Croatia, 9 April 2010). Total of 20 experts from the ERI SEE Chairmanship, the RCC Secretariat (including the Legal Advisor), members of the ERI SEE Governing Board from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia, members of the Consultative Body from Austria, The Netherlands and Norway, as well as TFBHC representatives took part in the discussion and contributed to the finalisation of the document.

March-April 2010

*Thematic session of the 12th meeting of the ERI SEE Governing Board and
Consultative Body, Zagreb, Croatia, 9 April 2010*

2.4.4. Consultation process on the MoU at national level

Following the adoption of the finalised draft MoU at the 12th meeting of the ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body, the Chair of the ERI SEE Governing Board invited the SEE countries to initiate a national consultation process/internal adoption

process and to ensure commitment for signing the MoU at the 23rd Session of the Council of Europe Standing Conference of Ministers of Education.

April-May 2010

2.4.5. Signing of the MoU

The MoU was officially signed by the Ministers responsible for Education and Higher Education of the Republic of Albania, the Republic of Croatia, the Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and the Republic of Serbia, as well as by the high-level representatives of the RCC and the TFBHC at a ceremonial signing session organised side by side with the 23rd Session of the Council of Europe Standing Conference of Ministers of Education.

Brdo, Slovenia, 5 June 2010

3. ERI SEE ACTIVITIES ACCORDING TO THE DEFINED OUTPUTS 2008-2010

In parallel with wrapping-up the transformation process, ERI SEE will continue to work on achieving its' mid-term objectives by implementing activities in line with the defined ERI SEE outputs 2008-2010. The activities foreseen are presented according to the five agreed outputs.

3.1. Output 1: ERI SEE members are informed on lifelong learning initiatives in the region and had the opportunity to develop a common strategy

Activities implemented:

3.1.1. Signing of the Cooperation Agreement, peer-learning visit to the Netherlands and third meeting of the SEEVET-Net

Supported by ERI SEE, the European Training Foundation and CROSS – The Netherlands, the networking of the SEE VET agencies and institutions continues in 2010.

As agreed at the second meeting of the SEEVET-Net (Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, December 2009), the ERI SEE Agency urged few times the Chair of the SEEVET-Net to arrange a working session of the expert group from Albania, Montenegro and Serbia which had the task to prepare an updated text of the draft Agreement for Cooperation. The final version of the Agreement was to be agreed by the SEE VET institutions, as well as the way of signing the document.

In the period January – March the ERI SEE Agency cooperated with MBO Raad⁵ in planning of the third SEEVET.Net meeting as an event combined with a visit to relevant Dutch institutions. The visit will be hosted by MBO Raad. The preparatory activities for the visit and for the third meeting of SEEVET.Net will be intensified following the taking over of the responsibilities for implementation of the ERI SEE Work Programme 2010 by the interim operational structure.

3.1.2. Continuation of expert networking in lifelong learning

The Internet forum on lifelong learning as a platform for professional communication, exchange of experience and peer-learning among the SEE experts functioned until

⁵ The Dutch association that represents the educational institutes for secondary VET and adult education funded by the Government.

the end of April 2010. Topics relevant for lifelong learning were put on the ERI SEE blog, too.

3.1.3. Updates of the information on lifelong learning on the ERI SEE website

The library of documents on lifelong learning available on the ERI SEE website was periodically updated in the first half of 2010.

3.2. Output 2: Information on the European Qualification Framework and the development of National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF) in the SEE region has been improved

Activities implemented:

3.2.1. Information exchange within the Governing Board and among experts on Qualifications Frameworks

The development of NQFs is top priority of the ERI SEE members. The IPA and ENPI programmes provide substantial support to SEE in this area. In 2010, ERI SEE continued to support the professional communication, exchange of experience and peer-learning among the SEE experts via the web-based forum and blog on NQFs.

3.2.2. Provision of relevant information on Qualifications Frameworks on the ERI SEE website

The updating of the library of documents on qualifications frameworks available on the ERI SEE website continued until April 2010.

3.2.3. Synergy of the activities with the Council of Europe, the European Training Foundation and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

The mutual coordination and information exchange on the activities in the region with the Council of Europe, the European Training Foundation, the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development and the ERI SEE continued in this period. The coordination was not limited to qualifications frameworks, but addressed different areas of education and training in which the three institutions are active in the region such as: inclusive education, teacher training, as well as citizenship and human rights education.

3.3. Output 3: The issues of quality and equity in education are promoted and strong networks have been established

Activities implemented:

3.3.1. Seminar of the network of the SEE national institutions on assessment and evaluation in pre-university education

Aiming to ensure continuity of the support to the networking and peer-learning among the SEE national institutions on assessment and evaluation⁶, the ERI SEE Agency used to update periodically the partner institutions about the progress of the ERI SEE development process. The activities for organisation of a networking event in 2010 will be intensified following the taking over the responsibility by the interim operational structure.

⁶ Sustained since 2006.

3.3.2. Continuation of the ERI SEE internet forum and blog on assessment and evaluation in pre-university education

The web-based ERI SEE forum⁷ and the blog functioned as a regional platform in support to networking of experts in assessment and evaluation in primary and secondary education until the end of April 2010.

3.3.3. Continuation of the ERI SEE internet forum and blog on quality assurance in education

The ERI SEE internet forum on quality assurance in education and the blog functioned until the end of April 2010.

3.3.4. Provision of relevant information on quality and equity in education on the ERI SEE website

Updates of the library of documents on quality and equity in education were provided until April 2010.

3.4. Output 4: The knowledge triangle (education, research and innovation) has strengthened in South Eastern Europe

Activities implemented:

3.4.1. Enabling efficient networking of Bologna Process actors including the ERI SEE web-based forum and blog

The ERI SEE internet forum⁸ and blog on the Bologna Process functioned until the end of April 2010.

3.4.2. Support to the networking and peer-learning among SEE bodies of quality assurance in higher education

The peer-learning visits in support to networking and peer-learning among the SEE bodies for quality assurance in higher education will continue in 2010. Following the taking over of the responsibility by the interim operational structure, the topic and the agenda of the peer-learning visit will be jointly agreed with the national quality assurance bodies in SEE.

3.4.3. Provision of relevant information on the “knowledge triangle” on the ERI SEE website

The library of documents on the “knowledge triangle” was periodically updated until April 2010.

3.5. Output 5: The SEE Education Initiative is recognised as a reliable regional partner in the education sector of South Eastern Europe

3.5.1. Twelfth meeting of the ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body (Zagreb, Croatia, 8-9 April 2010)

The meeting was organised by the ERI SEE Agency and hosted by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports of the Republic of Croatia. Members of the ERI SEE

⁷ Established in 2008.

⁸ Established in 2008.

Governing Board and Consultative Body or replacements, representatives of the RCC Secretariat, the TFBHC and the ERI SEE Agency (in total 20) took part to the meeting.

The meeting addressed: update on the progress of the “ERI SEE Development Process”; discussion on further steps and options for an interim operational structure for managing ERI SEE activities in the period between the closing of the ERI SEE Agency in Zagreb and the establishment of a new ERI SEE Secretariat; presentation and adoption of the ERI SEE Activity and Financial Reports 2009 ERI SEE and the Activity Report 2010; presentation of the Survey of the Possibilities for ERI SEE Involvement in EU Funded Projects; a one day thematic session on finalisation of the draft MoU & adoption of the finalised text, as well as presentation of the South East European Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning (SEECCEL).

Conclusions and recommendations of the meeting:

1. “ERI SEE Development Process”:

- Consultancies with the ERI SEE members on the readiness to nominate an interim operational structure to be launched with 1 May as deadline for expression of interest.
- The Ministry of Science, Education and Sports of the Republic of Croatia to initiate an official procedure towards the Government of the Republic of Croatia for closing the ERI SEE Agency by the end of May 2010.
- The ERI SEE Agency to work on closing the financial activities and to organise audit of the financial accounts in 2010.
- The ERI SEE Agency to prepare the handing-over of the documentation, the equipment and the furniture and to organise an event for transfer of know-how to the interim organisational structure in the second half of May.
- The special thematic session enabled completion of the work on the preparation of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Role and Organisation of the Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE) and the finalised text was adopted by the Governing Board members.
- As of 12th April, the text of the finalised MoU to be communicated to the ERI SEE members for launching national consultations and ensuring national support and political commitment for signing the MoU in June 2010.

2. ERI SEE Reports

The Governing Board approved the ERI SEE Activity Report January – December 2009, the ERI SEE Activity Report January – April 2010 and the ERI SEE Financial Report 2009.

3. Survey on the Possibilities for ERI SEE Involvement in EU Funded Projects

- Efforts to be put for arranging a meeting of representatives of the ERI SEE Chairmanship with officials of the European Commission, with the objective to present the ERI SEE transformation process leading to a renewed political commitment and a structure enabling involvement in projects using different funding options for regional cooperation. In this context, the future ERI SEE involvement in EU funded projects (in particular the IPA Multi Beneficiary Programme, TAIEX, Tempus, the South-East Europe Transnational Cooperation Programme 2007-2013 etc) would be discussed during the meeting.

- In context of the preparations for widening the scope of ERI SEE funding sources, the interim operational structure to organise a working group of experts knowledgeable of EU programmes relevant for regional cooperation (the IPA Multi Beneficiary Programme, TAIEX, Tempus, the South-East Europe Transnational Cooperation Programme 2007-2013 etc.), with the task to explore the priority areas of different programmes and to identify the areas in which education fits in.
- Consultations to be organised with the ERI SEE countries and donor countries which are members of the EU in order to agree intensified lobbying for the transformed ERI SEE and for its involvement in partnerships relevant for the development of education in support to sustainable and inclusive growth in SEE.

4. Swiss representation in the ERI SEE Consultative Body

The participants took note on the SDC decision for ceasing the Switzerland's representation in the Consultative Body, motivated by the ERI SEE transformation process aiming at its' stronger anchoring in the region⁹. They expressed appreciation for the partnership with Switzerland, the role of SDC as member of the Consultative Body, the importance of the interest of SDC to follow-up the future developments and stressed the importance of the decision for continuation of the financial support to ERI SEE.

3.5.2. Enhanced ERI SEE visibility and networking

- The publication “ERI SEE Work Programme 2010 and ERI SEE Reports 2009 and 2008” was prepared and published in May 2010. It provides a brief overview of ERI SEE, outlines the goals and the outcomes to be achieved by 2010, presents the ERI SEE Work Programme 2010 and reports on the work done in 2009 and 2008. The publication also provides an opportunity for insight into the ERI SEE plans for the future (the ERI SEE development process). It offers a variety of concise and in depth information on the developments and initiatives of ERI SEE, thus offering a unique source of information about the Initiative for the wider education community, in particular for the actors and the stakeholders in the region and Europe, as well as for the international counterparts.
- In the first half of 2010, ERI SEE was presented at three events relevant for human capital development and for regional cooperation in education and training:

Conference on the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR), Budapest, Hungary, 25-26 February 2010 – Building on the input prepared by the ERI SEE Agency, representative of the Federal Ministry of Education, the Arts and Culture of Austria has presented ERI SEE at the Conference workshop “Human development – culture, education and identity”. It has been agreed the EUSDR to support the emergence of common values and to address the “soft factors”, such as education and culture. It has been concluded that projects in the area of Human Development do not have to start from scratch but can build on already existing networks. In this respect, the Danube Rectors' Conference, CECE and ERI SEE have been mentioned explicitly.

⁹ SDC letter to the ERI SEE Agency of 1 April 2010.

Conference “Crossing minds and borders in the Western Balkan Countries”, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 11-12 March 2010 -

The Conference marked the end of the four year Cooperation Programme of the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education (SIU) and the Research Council of Norway (RCN) with the Western Balkans. The member of the Bologna Follow-up Group from Bosnia and Herzegovina represented ERI SEE at the Conference. In the capacity of invited speaker, he has provided input on the Bologna Process in the region. The Conference has focused on the overall aims of the Co-operation Programme - cross-national cooperation in order to promote stability and democratisation in the Western Balkan Countries and has outlined the priorities of a follow-up Norwegian cooperation programme with the Western Balkans.

SEE Education Conference “Parental Involvement in the Life of Schools Matter”, Becici, Montenegro, 23-24 April –

The Montenegrin member of the ERI SEE Governing Board represented the Initiative at the Conference. The Conference was organised in the framework of the regional research project initiated by the Education Support Program of the Open Society Institute. The Conference has supported the informed dialogue on the introduction and implementation of policies and practice for meaningful parental engagement in the life of schools. The regional and national actions for advancing education inclusion and quality through parental engagement in the life of schools and establishing the sustainable home – school – community partnership have been outlined. Having in view that quality and equity in education is a thematic priority of ERI SEE, there is room for joint cooperation in the future.

3.5.3. Improvement of the ERI SEE website

Aiming to enable informed decision of the Governing Board on the continuation of the ERI SEE forums and the blog in the future, evaluation of the actual usage of these platforms was carried out in May 2010. The outcomes of the evaluation were presented in the Report to the Governing Board in support to the discussion on the further support to this ICT based regional platform. The Report addresses the background of the establishment of the forums, the capacity building measures for the e-moderators, the actions for improvement of the computer moderated communication undertaken in 2009, provides a brief description of the work of the forums as well as statistics of the forums & the blog for 2009 and 2010.

Conclusions and recommendations of the Report:

The registered users of the forums, the five moderators and other experts involved in ERI SEE activities consider that the ERI SEE ICT based platform is an important tool for regional exchange of experience, good practice and mutual learning.

The moderators have identified different reasons for the low level of interactivity within the forums and the blog, such as:

- The crowded agendas on the workplace of the employees of the respective Ministries, other national institutions responsible for different areas of education and training, NGOs etc;

- The use of English language for ERI SEE communication might be an obstacle for a more intensive interactive communication;
- The need to achieve a critical mass of registered users.

The recommendations are focused on the importance of an intensified campaign, including continuation of the positive practice to use the ERI SEE events as an opportunity for promotion of the forums and the blog.

It is considered that potential continuation of this ICT based platform could be expected after the establishment of a new ERI SEE Secretariat under the stipulations of the new MoU (Brdo, Slovenia, June 2010).

3.5.4. Office management and administration

Activities for office management and administration were implemented in accordance with the changed circumstances driven by the “ERI SEE development process”. Following the 12th meeting of the ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body, the activities for closing the work of the Agency were intensified. The actions for closing the Agency were synchronised with the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports of the Republic of Croatia and were implemented according to a jointly agreed time schedule. The employment contracts of the staff members were terminated and the respective procedures with different Croatian authorities were completed. The payments from the accounts of the Agency were completed and the final financial report was prepared. The Croatian State Archives was informed about the decision of the Governing Board for closing the ERI SEE Agency. The preparatory activities and the documentation needed for handing-over the ERI SEE documentation, the backup of the ERI SEE web site & the content of the disks of the computers of the Agency, as well as the inventory of the equipment & the furniture of the Agency were completed. They were presented and handed-over at the handing-over meeting with representatives of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports and the Centre for Technology Transfer on 29 June 2010.

Following the 12th meeting of the ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports of the Republic of Croatia prepared the proposal of the Regulation on Termination of the Work of the Agency for Education Reform Initiatives of South Eastern Europe¹⁰. The Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted the Regulation on 17 June 2010. In line with the stipulations of the Regulation, the Agency ceased its work on 30 June 2010.

3.5.5. Planning and reporting activities

The ERI SEE Work Programme and Budget 2010 were prepared and approved by the SEE Governing Board in a distance voting procedure.

The Activity Report 2009 and the Financial Report 2009 were prepared, submitted to the members of the Governing Board and approved at the 12th meeting of the ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body (Zagreb, Croatia, 8-9 April 2010).

The ERI SEE Activity Report January-April 2010 was presented at the 12th meeting of the ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body. Following the closure of the Agency, the ERI SEE Activity Report January-June 2010 was

¹⁰ Official Journal of the Republic of Croatia “Narodne Novine” N^o 77/2010.

prepared and submitted to the members of the Governing Board, as well as to the ERI SEE donors in August 2010.

Activities related to the financial reporting

Twofold financial reporting activities took place in 2010:

- **Reports in accordance with the obligations defined in the agreements signed between the ERI SEE Agency and the donor countries Austria, The Netherlands and Switzerland for 2009.** Separate external audits of the ERI SEE accounts according to the generally accepted accounting principles were carried-out in the period January – March 2010. Audited financial reports were submitted to the counterparts on the following agreements:
 - Agreement between KulturKontakt Austria and the ERI SEE Agency for co-financing of the activities in accordance with the ERI SEE Work Programme in 2009. The report was submitted to KulturKontakt Austria in March 2010.
 - Agreement between CROSS/EVD on behalf of The Netherlands Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the ERI SEE Agency for co-financing of the activities in accordance with the ERI SEE Work Programme in 2009. The report was submitted to IPS-CROSS in March 2010.
 - Agreement between the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the ERI SEE Agency for co-financing of the activities in accordance with the ERI SEE Work Programme in 2009. The report was submitted to SDC in March 2010.

- **Financial reports on the expenditures in the period January-May 2010, according to the financial arrangements with the donors Austria, The Netherlands and Switzerland for co-financing ERI SEE in the period January-May 2010.** Separate external audits of the ERI SEE accounts were carried-out in June 2010. Audited financial reports were submitted to KulturKontakt Austria, IPS-CROSS and SDC in August 2010.

- **Financial reporting towards the national authorities of the Republic of Croatia:**
 - Final financial report of the ERI SEE Agency covering the period January-December 2009 was prepared and submitted to the Croatian Financial Agency and the State Auditing Office of the Republic of Croatia (February 2010).
 - Periodical financial reports covering the periods:
 - January-March 2010
 - January-June 2010were prepared and submitted to the national authorities.
 - Balance sheet following the closure of the payments for the ERI SEE Agency was prepared in July 2010.

Updated priorities for regional cooperation, potential clustering and peer-learning topics within clusters (presented along the ERI SEE thematic areas 2008-2010)

Thematic area	Lifelong Learning	Qualifications frameworks	Quality and Equity in Education	The “Knowledge Triangle”
Country				
Bosnia and Herzegovina	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VET development • Entrepreneurial learning • Adult education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NQF development, with special attention to non-formal and informal education 		
Croatia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VET development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intensified cooperation in NQF development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality at all levels of education • Equity in education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher education development, including the Bologna Process • Learning regions • Innovative partnerships
Moldova	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VET system development • Links with the labour market • Occupational standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NQF development and references to the EQF 		
Montenegro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postsecondary VET 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of diplomas • NQF development, Europass • Links between higher education and VET, including postsecondary education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality assurance at all levels of education 	
Romania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VET Quality assurance bodies (first priority) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NQF development (fourth priority) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality assurance at all levels of education • Governance and efficiency in education (second priority) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modernisation of higher education (third priority)
Serbia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VET development, including postsecondary VET 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NQF development • The link of higher education with the employment sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality assurance at all levels of education • Teacher training • Equity in education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Bologna Process
European partners of ERI SEE				
Austria	Sustaining the networking of the newly established structures for education and training (VET agencies, quality assurance bodies and institutions, ENIC/Naric centres etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NQF development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equity in education. • Governance and efficiency in education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change management • Promotion of network and partnerships and enhancing innovation • The teaching profession for the 21st century • Learning regions • The role of universities in the process of forward thinking
The Netherlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEE VET network 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of education at primary and secondary level, including the role of schools and teachers 	