

## Activity Report on the implementation of the ERI SEE Work Programme 2008

### Political context

In the year 2008, the Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE) continued to function as a regional platform for co-operation in the education area and to serve as an interface between on-going national reforms in South Eastern Europe (SEE), the trends and developments in the education sector at EU level and to support capacity building and knowledge transfer relevant for the on-going EU integration process of the region. The ERI SEE activities also addressed more global developments in education and training, to which the SEE countries have committed themselves<sup>1</sup>.

The year 2008 was crucial for the increased regional ownership of the cooperation process in SEE. The Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) was officially launched on 27 February 2008, as the successor of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe. The RCC is intended to sustain focused regional cooperation in SEE through a regionally owned and led framework that also supports European and Euro-Atlantic integration. It is turned to developmental projects and creation of a political climate susceptible to implementing projects of a wider, regional character, to the benefit of each individual country.

The work of the RCC focuses on six priority areas: economic and social development, energy and infrastructure, justice and home affairs, security cooperation, building human capital, and parliamentary cooperation as an overarching theme.

Aiming to meet the challenge of coordinating and promoting regular dialogue and partnership between the areas of education and research cooperation in SEE, to mobilise the full potential of the available EU instruments for promoting joint projects, and cooperation on national and regional innovation priorities, the RCC launched a new Task Force on Fostering and Building Human Capital (TFBHC). The TFBHC facilitates the

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<sup>1</sup> The World Declaration on Education for All and the Dakar Framework for Action, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005 - 2014.

dialogue and cooperation in this priority area and works on promotion of coherency and coordination between the relevant areas and stakeholders.

On the occasion of the Informal Conference of European Ministers of Education in Oslo (5-6 June 2008), the Ministers of education from SEE signed the Joint Statement on Building Human Capital and Promoting Diversity through Dialogue, Creativity and Innovation. They reaffirmed their willingness to contribute to strong regional and European partnerships within the RCC of the South Eastern European Cooperation Process (SEEC) and pledged to support its work as members of its new Task Force Fostering and Building Human Capital and of the Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe.

The above mentioned developments strongly influenced the work of ERI SEE in 2008. This report intends to make a synthesis of the activities that were organised and coordinated by the ERI SEE Agency in the period January-December 2008. The implementation of the activities was made possible and is a result of the joint efforts and work with the experts of the Stability Pact Task Force Education and Youth/Regional Cooperation Council Task Force Building Human Capital (as successor of the TFEY launched in June 2008), the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports of the Republic of Croatia, the donors of the Initiative members of the ERI SEE Consultative Body (Austria, The Netherlands, Norway, and Switzerland), and all ERI SEE members: Bulgaria and Romania as EU Member States and donors, as well as Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, UNMIK/ Kosovo and Serbia. The ERI SEE Agency expresses appreciation and gratitude for the intensive cooperation and support witnessed in the process of realisation of the activities and the implementation of the Work Programme 2008.

## **1. Adoption of the ERI SEE long-term goal, mid-term objective and outputs 2008-2010**

In May 2008 the ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body adopted the long-term goal, mid-term objective and outputs 2008-2010. The ERI SEE Work Programme 2008 was developed around the five agreed outputs:

- Output 1: ERI SEE members are informed on lifelong learning (LLL) initiatives in the region and had the opportunity to develop a common strategy
- Output 2: Information on the European Qualification Framework and on the development of National Qualification Frameworks in the SEE region has been provided
- Output 3: The issues of quality and equity in education are promoted and strong networks have been established
- Output 4: The knowledge triangle (research, education and innovation) has strengthened in South Eastern Europe
- Output 5: The Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe is recognised as a reliable regional partner in the education sector of South East Europe.

## 2. Implementation of the ERI SEE activities under the five ERI SEE outputs

Different activities were developed in the SEE region, in cooperation and with support of the respective national authorities, experts from the ERI SEE donor countries, the Council of Europe, the European Training Foundation and the OECD in the areas identified as priorities.

### **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:**

##### **2.1.1. Regional seminar “Use of Project Cycle Management – an important tool for successful co-operation in the fields of education and training”, Belgrade, Serbia, 23-24 October 2008**

As part of the ERI SEE capacity building measures for participation in the Community programmes in education and training targeting the expert network established with the workshops and study visits organised in the period 2005-2007, this seminar took place in Belgrade, Serbia, on 23 and 24 October 2008. It was continuation of the training on Project Cycle Management (PCM) and enabled refreshment of the knowledge on different PCM phases.

Total of 16 representatives of Croatia, Montenegro, the Republic of Macedonia and Serbia, as well as experts-trainers from The Netherlands (key expert, trainer and moderator of the event), Slovakia and Romania took part to the seminar.

The seminar focused on planning the project implementation (defining the activities needed to achieve the project objective, specification of resources needed and development of cost schedules). A Leonardo da Vinci project was used for practical work and exercise. The participants also had the opportunity to assess a project proposal submitted under the transversal Lifelong Learning Programme action. This session aimed to support the experts in the future tasks as assessors of project proposals in education and training.

Added value to the discussion on the possibilities for future regional cooperation provided the reach expertise of the leading expert Mr. Ton Farla, who has evaluated 60 projects supported by the European Commission in different SEE countries.

#### **Recommendations for future regional cooperation:**

- In order to support good governance, it is necessary to focus the capacity building support on organising and facilitating the policy learning process, strategy formulation and policy action in the countries.
- A rigorous PCM approach based upon the logical framework as a primary set of project design and management tools is needed to support a more systematic and standardised approach.

- It is important to widen the concept of capacity building, not only by paying attention to training, but also to organisation of strategic development, human resources development (HRD) policies and strategies, organisation management and tools, production control processes etc.
- Training in leadership, HRD management, and writing policy related documents is needed.
- Building knowledge on EC procedures and EC support programmes is needed.
- Strengthening the national capacities for writing Terms of Reference and other programming documents (e.g. project fiche) is needed.

The participants agreed a seminar on writing Terms of Reference and project fiche to be foreseen with the ERI SEE Work Programme 2009.

### **2.1.2. First Networking Conference of the VET Agencies and Institutions of South Eastern Europe, Tirana-Albania, 25-26 September 2008**

VET contributes significantly to jobs creation, economic growth and social development, as well as to personal development and social inclusion. It constitutes an important part of lifelong learning. In order to fulfil this major role, the VET systems in SEE are undergoing fundamental changes.

The national efforts in SEE, continuously supported by expertise and projects jointly realised with relevant international institutions (e.g. ETF, World Bank, OECD), as well as based on agreements for bilateral cooperation (e.g. KulturKontakt Austria, GTZ, USAID), have brought relevant results in building the national VET systems: adoption and implementation of legislation and policies, establishment of national VET agencies and/or other institutions at national, regional and local level, activities to increase the quality and attractiveness of VET, relevance of curricula and qualifications to labour market needs and use of learning outcomes based approaches, pathways to further and higher education, the learning and training needs of teachers and trainers, learning partnerships, social partners involvement, widening access and improving equity of participation, as well as increased opportunities for participation of disadvantaged groups.

The diversity of the VET systems in SEE is an asset which serves as a basis for mutual learning and support to future reforms. It calls for increased transparency and common understanding of the systems as a basis for building mutual trust, thus paving the way to mutual recognition of qualifications and skills acquired in different countries of the region. By putting efforts to use the European frameworks, instruments and tools, the SEE countries will increasingly enable their involvement in the common European Area of Education.

The Tirana Conference brought together 41 top level officials and experts from the national agencies and institutions from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, UNMIK/Kosovo and Turkey<sup>2</sup>, as

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<sup>2</sup> As a candidate country for EU Membership and a country which belongs to the SEECP<sup>2</sup>, Turkey will also be involved in the networking process.

well as experts from Austria, the Netherlands, Norway and Slovenia, the European Training Foundation (ETF) and the ERI SEE Agency.

The main objective of the Conference was to contribute to establishing a network of VET agencies/institutions of SEE.

The Conference also enabled updating on the recent European developments and the SEE developments in the fields of qualifications frameworks and lifelong learning.

The Conference contributed to:

- Better understanding of the current situation of VET in Europe and of the relevance of sustainable networking of VET agencies and institutions in SEE;
- Acquiring knowledge on the lessons learned in the process of establishing of VET agencies and institutions in SEE, transfer of experiences of some EU Member States and better understanding of the main aspects of the work of the VET agencies;
- Discussion and agreement of a roadmap for development of sustainable mutual co-operation between the VET agencies and institutions of SEE;
- Understanding of the current situation of VET development in SEE and its role in the development of qualifications frameworks and lifelong learning, as well as to identification of topics relevant for regional cooperation in both areas.

In synergy with the activities of the European Training Foundation (ETF), continuation of the networking of the VET agencies and institutions of SEE was enabled at the special meeting organized as part of the Conference “Implementation strategies for national qualifications frameworks in South Eastern Europe“(Ankara, Turkey, 17-18 December 2008).

### **2.1.3. Special Networking session of VET agencies /institutions of South Eastern Europe during the Conference “Implementation strategies for national qualifications frameworks in South Eastern Europe“, Ankara, Turkey, 17-18 December 2008**

On 17-18 December 2008 the ETF, together with the Vocational Qualifications Authority of Turkey (MYK) and ERI SEE, organised a conference on implementation strategies for national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) in SEE. The implementation strategy of MYK was central to the conference, which also focused on how to ensure the active involvement of sectors in NQFs, how to strengthen quality assurance, the assessment and certification processes, how to develop sustainable structures, and how to finance NQFs.

Aiming to support the networking between the VET agencies and institutions of SEE which was initiated with the First Networking Conference which took place in Tirana, the Ankara conference dedicated a special session to SEE networking (18 December). SEE representatives from Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Turkey, as well as representatives of the ETF, ERI SEE and the United Kingdom took part to the meeting.

All participants supported the networking initiative and agreed to continue the efforts at national level for involvement of the respective national institutions as partners in the network.

The discussion on the form of networking of SEE VET agencies and institutions developed around the conclusions and recommendations of the Tirana conference and the draft Memorandum of Understanding of the regional network of VET agencies and similar institutions of SEE, prepared by the National VET Agency of Albania.

### **Future networking steps agreed:**

#### **1. SEE Regional VET Network establishment:**

- Based upon the recommendations of the Tirana conference and the meeting in Ankara, the Director of the Romanian TVET Agency to prepare a draft cooperation agreement.
- The Director of the National VET Agency of Albania to communicate the draft cooperation agreement to the respective SEE VET agencies and institutions for comments and recommendations for improvement of the draft text.
- Mid-February 2009 was foreseen as a period for signing the cooperation agreement of the SEE regional VET network.

#### **2. ETF support to the SEE Regional VET Network in 2009:**

- Support to all SEE countries in specific national aspects of development of the respective education and training systems in lifelong learning perspective, including the area of national qualifications frameworks;
- Involvement of the SEE countries in the ETF regional initiatives on social inclusion through education and training, teaching and learning entrepreneurial learning, quality assurance in VET, post-secondary education and adult learning.

#### **ERI SEE support to the SEE Regional VET Network in 2009:**

- The meeting of the regional SEE VET network which will take place in 2009 to address quality of education in the context of lifelong learning and its' role in development of national qualifications frameworks.
- The ERI SEE Agency to extend an invitation to the SEE VET agencies and institutions for participation in the ERI SEE e-moderated forums in different thematic areas.
- The ERI SEE Agency to extend an invitation to the SEE VET agencies and institutions for participation in activities related to enriching the library of documents relevant for education and training development in SEE located on the ERI SEE website.

It was recommended the ETF and the ERI SEE to continue the process of coordination of the regional activities in SEE with the objective to avoid overlapping of themes and to use the human capacities in a rational way. For activities for which joint work would lead to added value, both institutions are committed to develop appropriate partnerships.

#### **2.1.4. Preparations for establishing a network/forum of experts in lifelong learning**

Building on the experience developed with the establishment and functioning of the ERI SEE forums on assessment and evaluation, quality assurance in education and on the Bologna Process, invitation for moderation of an ERI SEE forum on lifelong learning was prepared.

Relevant information on lifelong learning is provided via the ERI SEE web site ([http://www.erisee.hr/docs\\_lifelong.html](http://www.erisee.hr/docs_lifelong.html)).

#### **Output 2: Information on the European Qualifications Framework and on the development of national qualifications frameworks in the SEE region has been provided**

##### **Activities implemented:**

#### **2.2.1. Exchange of information on EQF and the development of national qualification frameworks in SEE at the ETI SEE Governing Board meeting (Podgorica, Montenegro, 2 December 2008)**

One working day of the Ninth meeting of the ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body (Podgorica-Montenegro, 1-2 December 2008) was dedicated to the qualifications frameworks (QF). Experts on QF from relevant institutions (the ETF, the Federal Ministry of Education, Culture and Arts of Austria and the Council of Europe) provided inputs on: the worldwide process of NQF development, the novelties at European level and the implementation of EQF; the role of learning outcomes in the development of NQFs, as well as on the Council of Europe coordinated regional network on qualifications frameworks in SEE.

The members of the ERI SEE Governing Board from Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Bulgaria, Croatia, Montenegro and Romania presented the national progress in the development of NQFs:

- The Council of Europe and the European Commission project on strengthening higher education (HE) in BiH has substantially contributed to a harmonised progress in the development of the QF for HE, quality assurance (QA) and recognition of qualifications in HE. The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in BiH (2007) defines the national descriptors of the knowledge, skills and abilities associated with bachelor, masters and doctoral degrees. Two IPA funded projects will support the further development of the BiH NQF by 2010. The projects will cover: development of a framework law on recognition of HE qualifications; legislation for QA and NQF in HE; implementing a generic qualification framework in four fields of study; establishment of a network of national experts on QA and QF for HE; strengthening the institutional capacities for QA and recognition in HE. The EU project “VET System Reform III – Copenhagen Process in BiH” supports NQF development for lower educational levels, including the VET sector. Consultations with different actors are on-going.

- Bulgaria has established a working group for NQF development. The framework is to be learning outcomes oriented and will be developed by 2010.
- Croatia has adopted the guiding development document “Baseline of the Croatian Qualifications Framework” (CROQF) in 2008. It defines eight levels, some of which with sub-levels. A council has been established with representatives of all relevant ministries and stakeholders. An operational team supports the work of the council. Awareness raising campaign among the general public, as well as an information campaign targeting the personnel involved in schools, companies and within the administration is ongoing.
- The Government of Montenegro has adopted the Strategy for establishing NQF which introduces generic descriptors for each cycle based on learning outcomes, competences and credit ranges. Intensive work on the implementation of the Strategy has taken place in 2008. A Montenegrin QF in line with the EQF is to be implemented by 2010. The implementation of the Strategy builds on: cooperation between institutions; institutional capacity building; definition on levels, sub-levels and descriptors; key competences; QA; validation of informal and non-formal education, as well as intensive communication and information of the wider public on the NQF.
- For a longer period, Romania works on the development of the NQF. National structures have been established and are accomplishing their role in the society. The National Adult Training Board has the role of a national Authority for Qualifications. The National Centre for Technical and Vocational Education Development contributes to the quality and to the attractiveness of IVET in Romania. The National Agency for Qualifications in Higher Education and Partnership with Economic and Social Environment (ACPART) is responsible for elaboration, implementation and updating the Romanian framework of HE qualifications.

### **Conclusions and recommendations for future activities:**

Having in view the dynamics and intensity of the work on NQFs development at European level and in the respective countries, it was agreed the novelties and the progress made to be discussed during the eleventh meeting of the ERI SEE Governing Board in 2009. In order to sustain the positive experience and to ensure high quality of the inputs, the ERI SEE Agency to cooperate with QF experts from the ETF, EUA, and the donor countries in the preparation of the event.

ERI SEE to support the regional networking in the area of QFs by establishing an e-moderated forum on QFs and by continuous updating of the content of the ERI SEE website with relevant information on QFs.

#### **2.2.2. Provision of information on qualifications frameworks on the ERI SEE web site**

Relevant documents on qualifications frameworks have been provided on the ERI SEE web site ([http://www.erisee.hr/docs\\_eqf.htm](http://www.erisee.hr/docs_eqf.htm)).

### **2.2.3. Synergy of the ERI SEE activities with the activities of the Council of Europe and the European Training Foundation**

The communication and mutual informing on the activities in the region in the area of development of national qualifications frameworks were sustained in 2008.

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

##### **Activities implemented:**

#### **2.3.1. Study visit to Croatia “Use of Information and Communication Technologies in the Quality Assurance Processes of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programmes”, Zagreb, Croatia, 18-19 December 2008**

This study visit to Croatia was initiated at the ERI SEE Round Table on Accreditation in Higher Education (Zagreb, Croatia, June 2007). The participants recommended ERI SEE to organise a study visit to Croatia in order enable better acquainting with the use of information and communication technologies in the quality assurance processes of higher education institutions and study programs, as well as with the information system of the Agency for Science and Higher Education of Croatia-MOZVAG.

The ERI SEE Agency and the Agency for Science and Higher Education of Croatia jointly organised the study visit. The Agency for Science and Higher Education cooperated with the Computer Center of the University of Zagreb (SRCE) and with the Faculty of Science of the University of Zagreb in the preparation of the event. The three institutions shared the tasks on presentation of different aspects of functioning of the ICT supported system of quality assurance in higher education in Croatia.

Total of 11 participants representing the Agency for Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Croatia, the Computer Center of the University of Zagreb (SRCE), representatives of the respective institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, the Faculty of Science of the University of Zagreb and the ERI SEE Agency took part to the meetings and presentations.

The study visit enabled exchange of experience on the use of information and communication technologies in the quality assurance processes at the level of higher education institutions and at the level of study programmes in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. Specifically, the participants were acquainted with the organisation and the functioning of the Information System of the Croatian Higher Education Institutions (ISVU) and the Information System of the Agency for Science and Higher Education of Croatia (MOZVAG). The on-going work on the project for development of an integrated information system for higher education and science in Croatia was also presented. An on-site demonstration of the use of ISVU by different stakeholders: teachers, students and administrative staff took place at the Faculty of Natural Sciences of the University of Zagreb.

## Conclusions and recommendations for future regional cooperation

The organisation of the ERI SEE study visit to Croatia provided the opportunity for acquainting into details with the current Croatian information system of higher education (ISVU) and the information system of the Agency for Science and Higher Education of Croatia (MOZVAG), as well as for getting information on the on-going activities for the development of an integrated information system of science and higher education of Croatia.

The knowledge acquired will be disseminated to the Montenegrin expert group which works on updating the module which supports the student work at the University of Montenegro. The study visit to Croatia has confirmed the importance of establishment of optical cables links between the higher education institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Development of ICT supported modules covering students, teachers and study programmes would be future steps of Bosnia and Herzegovina towards the development of an information system for support to higher education.

The participants to the study visit recommended ERI SEE to continue supporting the regional dialogue, the process of mutual learning and exchange of experience and co-operation among experts in quality assurance in higher education by covering different aspects of this complex process (the development of tools for ICT support to quality assurance in higher education being one of them).

### **2.3.2. Dissemination of the results of the EU funded project MHADIE (Measuring Health and Disability in Europe: Supporting Policy Development)**

The first presentation of the MHADIE project in the SEE region took place at the ERI SEE seminar "Equity in Education – a Challenge for South Eastern Europe" (Prishtina, UNMIK/ Kosovo, October 2007). The seminar highlighted the current situation of substantial differences in defining and measuring disability in the European countries (including SEE). This hinders the development of common policy guidelines for persons with disabilities.

The European Commission has mandated the MHADIE project to provide the background and justification for recommendations and guidelines that will help to design new European policy on health and disability. As a platform which supports linking the SEE efforts with the EU and wider international activities, ERI SEE enabled dissemination of the results and recommendations of the MHADIE project on the ERI SEE web site (including six educational recommendations). As ERI SEE donor, Switzerland supported the work of the Zurich University of Teacher Training (partner institution in the MHADIE project) on preparation of adequate presentation of the project.

The dissemination of the MHADIE results and recommendations is also in line with the mandate on identification of disability inequalities emerging from the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities to which the SEE countries are signatories.

➔ For further information on the MHADIE project please visit:  
<http://www.erisee.hr/mhadie.html>

### **2.3.3. Fourth Regional EDC Networking Conference for South East Europe”Teacher Training and Intercultural Dialogue: Competences for teachers to enhance citizenship and human rights education”, Zagreb, Croatia, 12-13 June**

The meeting was jointly organised by the Council of Europe, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports of the Republic of Croatia and the ERI SEE Agency.

Established in 2006, today the SEE network of SEE coordinators of education for democratic citizenship and human rights education (EDC/HRE) involves an increased number of countries, the level of participants is higher in terms of commitment and knowledge, as well as increase of partnerships: universities, ERI SEE, ICRC, British Council, CIVITAS, the Wergeland Center in Oslo etc. The network operates side by side with other networks: the Baltic Black Sea Network and the Nordic Network.

The Zagreb conference (33 participants in total) addressed: the theoretical concepts and models concerning intercultural competences and sensitivity; presentation of the Norwegian “Wergeland Center”, European Resource Centre on Education for Intercultural Understanding, Human Rights and Democratic Citizenship which aims to support and promote the Council of Europe’s work in these fields; presentation of CIVITAS, a worldwide organisation based on partnerships and the materials developed by the British Council: “What is living together?” under a large scale project to stimulate dialogue and cooperation in 25 countries with a focus on SEE.

The SEE experts worked collaboratively in small groups aiming at offering positive criticism to the draft version of the CoE document “Empowering Teachers: Core Competence for EDC/HRE”. The suggestions and recommendations of the two days work were considered in the process of finalisation of this document.

The discussion on the future of the SEE EDC network addressed different aspects of the cooperation: the advantages provided by the network (peer learning, getting valuable information on the developments in the neighboring countries, exchange of views and increased cooperation opportunities); themes for future meetings of the network; timing of the network meetings; possible extension of the network; the methods of work (meetings focused on a specific topic with a balanced mix of input and peer learning; in the months to come, discussions will take place on the need and the possible ways of formalisation of the work of the network).

### **2.3.4. Regional seminar on Matura exams (Sofia, Bulgaria, 11-12 December 2008)**

The seminar was organised by the ERI SEE Agency in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Bulgaria and Cito International from the Netherlands.

Total number of 20 SEE experts on national and international assessments from the ERI SEE members (Bulgaria, Croatia, the Republic of Macedonia and Romania), as well as the

donor countries the Netherlands and Switzerland took part to the seminar. For the first time, experts from Slovenia and the Regional Cooperation Council participated and contributed an ERI SEE seminar in the field of assessment and evaluation.

In the on-going process of reforms of their education and training systems, all ERI SEE countries have identified the quality, equity and transparency as strategic objectives. The Matura exams are of crucial importance for increasing these aspects of the system. In this context, the ERI SEE countries pay special attention to analysis of the existing systems and are undertaking research on identification of the possibilities for improvement. The improvements of the Matura exams in the SEE countries are based on the findings and recommendations of these projects.

Matura exams are administered in different ways in different SEE countries. The approaches differ from countries in which individual schools administer Matura exams, to countries in which the Matura exams are administered nationally or regionally, in which case, in addition to high school certification, the results of the Matura exams are usually used for entering tertiary education.

The SEE countries are also in different stages on reforming the Matura exams. Some countries have introduced national Matura exams and have gained experience of its implementation, others have decided to introduce national Matura exams and currently are in different preparatory phases, including the pilot phases. There are SEE countries which are in the process of analysis of the current system and identification of the optimal approach to Matura exams.

By bringing a regional perspective, the seminar supported the process of mutual learning and exchange of experience and good practice. The seminar provided the opportunity to be acquainted with the similarities and differences in the approaches applied in different countries.

The seminar addressed the Matura exams from the more formal aspects and moved to aspects of content. The two days work addressed:

- The relationships Matura – university entrance
- Quality of the Matura
- Matura and Educational development.

### **Conclusions and recommendations for future regional cooperation:**

The participants agreed that the seminar:

- Enabled exchange of information and experience about the different models of Matura exams in the SEE countries, the donor countries and Slovenia;
- The experts in assessment and evaluation from SEE were empowered to use the knowledge acquired during the seminar in the future national activities.

It was agreed that the process of regional networking needs to be sustained. In this context, it was recommended:

- the experts to join the existing ERI SEE e-moderated forum on assessment and evaluation
- to use the information on quality and equity in education provided on the ERI SEE website, as well as the documents and information produced in framework of the ERI SEE capacity building measures on assessment and evaluation organised in the period 2006-2008.
- It was recommended the ERI SEE Work Programme 2009 to include a regional seminar which will address the assessment and evaluation in SEE and the future challenges.

### **2.3.5. Establishment and moderation of a discussion platform for experts in the field of assessment and evaluation in education.**

A moderated ERI SEE forum on assessment and evaluation in education was established. The objective is to sustain the professional communication, exchange of experience and peer-learning that has been initiated in framework of different ERI SEE activities since 2006. The forum is open to wide participation of people interested in the topic.

### **2.3.6. Establishment and moderation of a discussion platform for experts in the field of quality assurance in education and training**

A moderated ERI SEE forum on quality assurance in education was established. The objective is to sustain the professional communication, exchange of experience and peer-learning that has been initiated in framework of different ERI SEE activities since 2004. The forum is open to wide participation of people interested in the topic.

### **2.3.7. Provision of documents on quality and equity in education on the ERI SEE web site**

Relevant documents on quality ([http://www.erisee.hr/docs\\_quality.htm](http://www.erisee.hr/docs_quality.htm)) and equity in education ([http://www.erisee.hr/docs\\_equity.htm](http://www.erisee.hr/docs_equity.htm)) are provided on the ERI SEE web site.

### **2.3.8. Participation of experts from ERI SEE members to the Ninth Annual AEA-Europe Conference (Hissar, Bulgaria, 6-8 November 2008)**

Supported with Croatian budget, ERI SEE enabled participation of experts from SEE to the Ninth Annual Conference of the Association for Educational Assessment – Europe (AEA-E). The Conference took place in Hissar, Bulgaria.

This activity was recommended by the participants to the ERI SEE seminar on national and international assessments (Bar, Montenegro, 28-29 September 2007). As continuation of the cooperation between Cito and ERI SEE, a joint initiative for a conference workshop on the use of standards set in national assessment was extended and accepted by the organisers.

Supported by ERI SEE, experts in assessment and evaluation from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Moldova took part to the Conference. As members of the Association, experts from Croatia also took part to the Conference.

The Conference focused on achieving quality in assessment - validity and standards. It provided the opportunity to discuss and refine the concept of validity, to give demonstrations of valid use of assessment data, to discuss standards for the development of assessments, as well as to report on the use of assessment to measure the achievement of standards. The ERI SEE experts took part to the workshop on the use of standards set in national assessment and contributed to the discussion group on the training and development of assessment professionals.

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

##### **Activities implemented:**

##### **2.4.1. Networking of different partners engaged in the Bologna Process**

Relevant documents on the “knowledge triangle” are provided on the ERI SEE web site ([http://www.erisee.hr/docs\\_triangle.htm](http://www.erisee.hr/docs_triangle.htm)).

The ERI SEE internet forum on the Bologna Process provides a platform for mutual learning, exchange of experience and good practice.

##### **2.4.2. Participation of ERI SEE representatives to the meeting of the General Assembly of the CEE Network of Quality Assurance Agencies and the workshop (Durrës, Albania, 23-24 May 2008)**

The ERI SEE Round Table on Accreditation in Higher Education (Zagreb, June 2007) recommended participation to the meeting of the General Assembly of the CEE Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education of representatives of the SEE countries which are not members of this network.

Since Bosnia and Herzegovina and UNMIK/Kosovo are in the initial phase of establishing respective national bodies, the participation of representatives of the respective ministries to the meeting of the CEE Network contributed to acquiring information relevant for shortening the period needed for achieving good quality functioning of the national bodies. The SEE representatives had the opportunity for networking with colleagues representing the countries members of the CEE Network and to exchange experience and good practice examples.

Total of 25 participants representing the members of the CEE network, the accreditation bodies which have applied for membership to the network (FIBAA – Foundation of International Business Administration Accreditation and ASSIN – Accreditation Non-profit accredited by the German Accreditation Council), the President of ENQA, the ECA coordinator, representatives of ERI SEE non-member countries and the ERI SEE Agency took part to the meeting and the workshop. The participants represented relevant quality assurance and/or accreditation bodies,

as well as ministries of education of the following countries: Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia and UNMIK/Kosovo.

The General Assembly meeting of the CEE Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (24 May) was a regular biennial event. The meeting enabled discussion of different legal, statutory, membership, financial and other topics relevant for the functioning of the network. This meeting was a founding meeting of the CEE Network Regional Cooperation Group, which will be registered as a legal entity under the Hungarian legislation.

The purpose of the CEEN Workshop on Regional Cooperation (23 May) was to raise awareness among the members of the network on the relevance of cooperation of the bodies for accreditation in higher education by presenting good practice examples at European level, cooperation at regional level and to be acquainted with the possibilities for realisation of a joint project under the GIQAC/INQAAHE (Global Initiative for Quality Assurance Capacity) project for regional cooperation.

#### **2.4.3. SEE Meeting on regional cooperation in the field of quality assurance in higher education (Durrës-Albania, 25 May 2008)**

Building on the presence of representatives of both CEE and SEE countries, this side-by-side meeting provided a wider platform for discussion on the relevance and the possibilities for regional cooperation in SEE in the field of quality assurance in higher education. Representatives of the SEE countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia and UNMIK/Kosovo, as well as representatives of Austria, Germany, Hungary (the Secretary General of the CEE Network on Quality Assurance in Higher Education), Latvia, Russia and Slovenia (16 participants in total) took part to the meeting.

The work of the Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe, with accent to quality assurance as a priority area for regional cooperation was presented and provided the background for the presentations and discussions. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and UNMIK/Kosovo presented the current structures and organisation of the quality assurance in higher education at national level, the on-going activities and the plans for the future. All SEE countries recognise the importance of regional cooperation in this area.

The meeting provided the opportunity for the SEE representatives to be better acquainted with regional and international cooperation developed by the quality assurance bodies of the countries members of the CEE network: Latvia, Russia and Slovenia.

#### **Conclusions and recommendations for future regional cooperation**

By acknowledging that quality assurance in higher education is an area in which regional cooperation needs be fostered, the participants agreed that support to the continuation of the regional dialogue and cooperation is necessary. The following conclusions and recommendations were adopted:

- ERI SEE to support the networking and peer-learning among the SEE bodies for quality assurance in higher education. In particular, the ERI SEE Work Programme 2009 to foresee organisation and financing of placement of staff members from the recently established agencies from BiH and UNMIK/Kosovo in the more advanced SEE agencies for quality assurance in higher education. The interest of other SEE countries (e.g. Moldova, Montenegro etc.) for involvement in this capacity building measure to be assessed.
- Building expertise for external evaluation is to become a field for capacity building measures in the coming years. The ERI SEE Work Programme 2009 to foresee organisation of a regional training seminar for experts for external evaluation.
- Increased internationalisation of the work in different segments of quality assurance in higher education is to become an imperative in the SEE countries. In this context, the national agencies for quality assurance could increase the quality of their work by adopting internationalisation as their strategic goal.
- It is very important to enable continuation of the process of providing opportunities to the SEE countries to learn from best practices in Europe and wider in the area of quality assurance in higher education. In this context, depending on the topics of the future regional cooperation, it would be very important to enable continuation of the already established cooperation with relevant counterparts (e.g. ENQA, ECA, CEE Network European Regional Cooperation Group, NOKUT, EUA etc.).
- By increasing the efforts to enable involvement of SEE experts in external evaluations, in the work of the national bodies for quality assurance in higher education etc., the SEE countries would contribute to improved perception of the region.
- In the process of preparation of the proposal for a GIQAC/CEE Network project, to assess the interest of the SEE countries which are not members of the CEEN European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation to join the project.
- Having in view the obstacles to mobility created by the visa regimes, it is important all counterparts involved in cooperation in quality assurance in higher education, wherever possible and whenever adequate, to address this issue and to support the efforts at national and European level for overcoming this barrier.

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

### **Activities implemented:**

#### **2.5.1. Organisation of ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body meetings**

Two meetings of the ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body were organised in 2008.

### **Eighth meeting of the ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body**

The Eighth meeting of the ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body was organised by the ERI SEE Agency. It took place in Zagreb, Croatia, on 21 April 2008.

The members of the Governing Board from: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNMIK/Kosovo, Montenegro, Romania, and the Task Force Education and Youth participated to the meeting. Croatia was represented by the Head of the Directorate for International Cooperation of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport and the financial officer of the same Ministry. Representative of the Ministry of Education and Youth presented Moldova. Bulgaria, the Republic of Macedonia and Serbia (written information was sent to the ERI SEE Agency before the meeting) were not represented.

The members of the Consultative Body from: the Task Force Education and Youth- KulturKontakt Austria, the European Training Foundation, CROSS/EVD on behalf of the Netherlands Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, as well as the OECD participated to the meeting. Representatives of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Council of Europe participated to the meeting. The member of the Consultative Body from the European University Association informed the ERI SEE Agency that the EUA will not be represented at the meeting. The Director of the Working Table 1 represented the Stability Pact.

Experts from the Task Force Education and Youth, the National Vet Agency of Albania, the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth of Romania and a Swiss expert on Project Cycle Management Support also participated to the meeting.

The agenda of the meeting covered: briefing on the developments regarding the Task Force Fostering and Building Human Capital and briefing on the OECD Global Forum on Education "Improving the Effectiveness of Education Systems", Santo Domingo, 3-6 March 2008; Final report on the ERI SEE activities 2007 (adopted); report on the activities January-April 2008; ERI SEE Work Programme 2008-2010; ERI SEE financial report 2007 (adopted) and budget 2008.

### **11<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Senior Officials from the ERI SEE Region "Building Human Capital and Promoting Diversity through Dialogue, Creativity and Innovation"**

The 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Senior Officials from the ERI SEE Region was organised by the Task Force Education and Youth (TFEY) (Zagreb, Croatia, 22 April 2008). The ERI SEE Agency provided organizational and logistical support.

The members of the Governing Board from: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, UNMIK/Kosovo, Romania, and the TFEY participated to the meeting. Croatia was represented by the Head of the Directorate for International Cooperation of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport. The Director of the National VET Agency represented Albania. A representative of the Moldovan Ministry of

Education and Youth also participated to the meeting. Representatives of the Romanian Ministry of Education, Research and Youth, the Government of Serbia and of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Macedonia also participated to the meeting.

The members of the Consultative Body from: Austria, The Netherlands, the ETF and the OECD participated to the meeting. Representatives of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation took part to the event. The Council of Europe, the Royal Ministry of Education and Research of Norway and the Director of the Working Table 1 of the Stability Pact participated to the meeting. Croatian expert from the KulturKontakt Austria project “K-Education” also participated to the meeting.

Bulgaria was not represented at the meeting.

The meeting provided update on the EU Developments and Priorities: priorities of the Slovenian EU Presidency in the field of education – achievements and outlook; the Informal Ministerial Conference (Oslo-Norway, 5-6 June 2008) – overview of themes and background; EU framework for promoting intercultural education and creativity; contribution of the Council of Europe to intercultural education and dialogue; management of diversity on school level – experiences from the EU and ERI SEE regions; empowering schools as promoters of tolerance, dialogue and creativity.

The meeting addressed building human capital and promotion of diversity through dialogue, creativity and innovation: cooperation for human capital development in the “knowledge triangle” perspective; the Task Force Fostering and Building Human Capital priorities and activities; preparation for a regional side event at the Oslo Informal Conference; proposal for a Coordinated Statement of the MoU Signatories/ERI SEE Member States.

### **Ninth meeting of the ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body**

The Ninth meeting of the ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body was organized by the ERI SEE Agency in cooperation with the Montenegrin Ministry of Education and Science. It took place in Podgorica on 1 and 2 December 2008.

The members of the Governing Board from: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Montenegro and the Task Force Building Human Capital participated to the meeting. Officials of the ministries responsible for education of the ERI SEE members Croatia, UNMIK Kosovo and Romania participated to the meeting as replacements for the respective members of the ERI SEE Governing Board. Albania, the Republic of Macedonia, Moldova and Serbia were not represented at the meeting.

Mr. Mladen Dragašević, Head of Building Human Capital and Cross-Cutting Issues Unit represented the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC).

The members of the ERI SEE Consultative Body from: KulturKontakt Austria, CROSS/EVD on behalf of the Netherlands Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), as well as from the Ministry of Education and Research from Norway participated to the meeting. The Council of Europe was represented at the meeting. Upon previous notification, the members of the ERI SEE Consultative Body from the EUA and the OECD did not participate to the meeting. The ETF was represented at the special session on qualifications frameworks which took place on 2 December.

The meeting provided the opportunity for briefings on novelties on:

- The Role of the Regional Cooperation Council in Fostering Human Capital Development in South Eastern Europe.
- The preparatory work for the International Conference “Fostering and Building Human Capital for Sustainable Knowledge Societies in South Eastern Europe” (Bucharest, Romania, March 2009).
- The Fifth Regional South East Europe Networking Conference on Citizenship and Human Rights Education “How all teachers can support citizenship and human rights education: a framework for the development of competences”, Durres, Albania, 4-5 November 2008.

The ERI SEE Activity and Financial Reports for the period January-November 2008 were adopted.

The draft versions of the ERI SEE Work Programme and Budget 2009 were discussed and recommendations for updating the documents were agreed.

The Concept for establishment of National ERI SEE Contact Points was adopted and future steps agreed.

### **2.5.2. Organisational development of ERI SEE**

Concept for establishing national ERI SEE contact points at the respective ministries or other institutions/organisations of the SEE countries was presented at the Ninth ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body meeting. Based on the recommendations of the participants, the updated version of the Concept was submitted to the ERI SEE Governing Board for approval on 24 December 2008. The process of establishing the network will follow the agreed time schedule.

Upon request of the National Archive of Croatia, the business secretary of the ERI SEE Agency passed the training course and become a staff member responsible for archival work of the Agency. The archival work will be supported with the recently purchased specialised software Archinet.

### **2.5.3. Institutional Development of the ERI SEE Secretariat**

In 2008 Switzerland supported the ERI SEE Agency in the process of planning, budgeting and monitoring the implementation of the activities.

The staff members of the Agency were involved in different training courses. The executive director attended the training on the use of EU funds. The business secretary attended a course on business English language. The IT assistant attended an advanced course on the use of the Adobe software package (Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign and Adobe Acrobat). The acquired knowledge contributes to improved quality of the work of the Agency.

#### **2.5.4. Enhanced ERI SEE visibility and networking (development of a concept and publishing a regional newsletter, improvement of the ERI SEE website)**

**2.5.4.1.** The ERI SEE Report 2007 and the Work Programme 2008-2010 were the basis for preparation and publishing of the **ERI SEE Publication** (June 2008). Copies of the publication were distributed at different events and occasions. Copies of the publication were provided to the members of the ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body for use and further dissemination.

Upon recommendation of the European Commission, presentation of the ERI SEE profile titled "Sustainable education reforms through regional cooperation" was published in the Issue 17 of the Public Service Review: European Union.

**2.5.4.2.** The Concept of a regional ERI SEE newsletter was developed, contributions from the ERI SEE members and partners were collected, and provided to the editor. It was planned the regional newsletter to be published in October. In spite of the declarations that the editing of the newsletter is progressing well, the editor did not produce the first draft.

Due to this negative experience, publishing of a second ERI SEE publication is scheduled for 2009.

**2.5.4.3.** The ERI SEE **leaflet** was prepared and published.

#### **2.5.4.4. ERI SEE web site improvement**

Having in view the importance of maintaining a web site with information in education and training relevant for the region and in accordance with the objectives of the Initiative, the website was enriched in different segments.

- **Calendar of activities in education and training relevant for South Eastern Europe**

As recommended by the ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body, a calendar of activities was put on the site. Currently, information on the ERI SEE events is available. Recognising the relevance of ERI SEE for dissemination of information and enabling sharing of experience and good practice of educational and research cooperation, linking with the web site of

the Project Leaders Seminar (Belgrade, October 2008) organised by the Research Council of Norway and the Norwegian Centre for International Co-operation in Higher Education was established.

Contribution of all members of the ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body is needed in order to enrich the calendar with information on the relevant events in the region organised in cooperation with different counterparts.

- **Documents: (<http://www.erisee.hr/documents.html>)**

The documents are organised according to the thematic areas that have been identified as priorities by the ERI SEE Governing Board. They are relevant for the implementation of the “Detailed Work Programme on the Follow-up of the Objectives of Education and Training Systems in Europe“, the Bologna and Copenhagen process, as well as the implementation of the Dakar Framework for Action “Education for All: Meeting the Collective Commitments” and the education objectives of the UN Millennium Development Goals.

The documents are structured as follows:

- Overarching and general documents
- Thematic areas:
  - Lifelong learning
  - European Qualification Framework - National Qualification Frameworks in SEE countries
  - Quality in education and training
  - Equity in education
  - The “knowledge triangle”: education, research and innovation
  - Education for sustainable development.

- **Library of documents per South Eastern European Countries**

The library contains relevant documents on education and training in South Eastern Europe. The documents have been made available to users of this web site by the members of the ERI SEE Governing Board.

The documents are organised per country and belong to following categories:

1. Policy documents
2. Legislation
3. Framework documents, Standards, Guidelines, Manuals etc.
4. Projects and good practices
5. Reviews and reports.

Currently, high number of documents is available for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Romania. In October 2008, part of the programme of the

study visit to the ERI SEE Agency of the Moldovan grantholder under the TFBHC mobility programme for capacity-building in regional cooperation management in SEE, was dedicated to identification and retrieving of relevant documents to be put on the ERI SEE web library/Moldova. The Bologna Process National Reports for all ERI SEE countries can be found in the library, too.

The experience with the library of SEE documents is positive and we would recommend all SEE countries to contribute to enriching the library.

→ For further information on the library of SEE documents please visit: <http://www.erisee.hr/library.htm>

- **ERI SEE internet forums**

As foreseen with the Work Programme 2008, ERI SEE internet forums were established in the areas: assessment and evaluation in education, quality assurance in education, as well as a Bologna Process forum. The moderators are experts in the respective areas from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia. The forums provide platforms for mutual learning and exchange of experience and practice.

In order to enable easier start and smooth running of the forums, the IZB Institute for International Cooperation in Education from Zurich-Switzerland organised an E-moderator training for computer moderated communication (Zagreb-Croatia, 27-28 October 2008). The forum moderators, the IT assistant and the other staff members of the ERI SEE Agency took part to the training. The training covered: asynchronous online tools for communication; characteristics of different media of online communication; the five-stage framework of asynchronous communication; designing online activities; pre-conditions for effective online collaboration; time as experienced in online activities; netiquette for online communication; task of an e-moderator; synchronous communication over the internet.

The IZB support continued with two iMeetings by the end of 2008. The first experiences, the difficulties and recommendations for future work were discussed during the first iMeeting (22 November). The discussion and exchange of experiences continued at the second iMeeting of the e-moderators (22 December 2008).

→ For further information on the ERI SEE forums please visit: <http://www.erisee.hr/forum>

- Support to efficient browsing the ERI SEE website is enabled by using the **sitemap** and the possibility to **search the ERI SEE website**.

The statistics of the traffic viewed on the ERI SEE web site January – December 2008 presented in Fig. 1 shows the impact of the activities undertaken on improvement of the site.

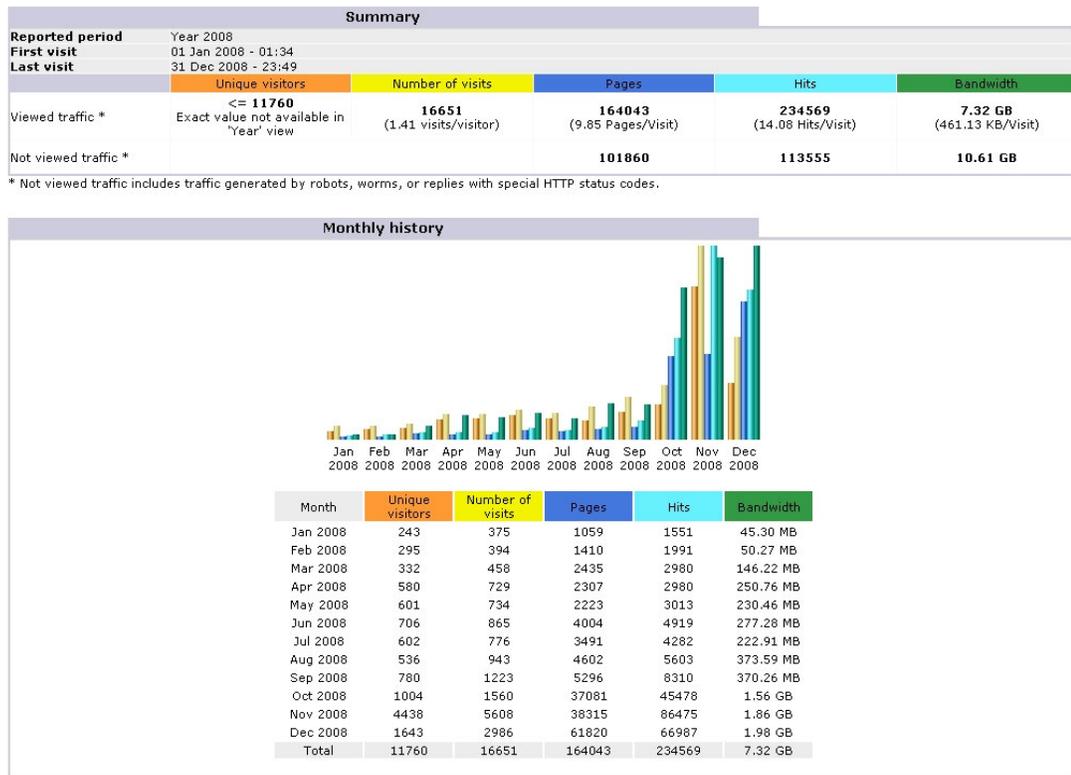


Fig. 1 Statistics of the traffic viewed on the ERI SEE web site January – December 2008

#### 2.5.4.5. Office management and administration

Activities for office management and administration were run continuously.

#### 2.5.4.6. Planning and reporting activities

Final versions of the activity reports and audited financial reports on the implementation of the agreements for co-financing ERI SEE in 2007, were prepared and submitted to each donor country member of the ERI SEE Consultative Body: Austria, Croatia, the Netherlands, Norway, and Switzerland. All reports were approved by the donor countries.

The ERI SEE Governing Board adopted the final ERI SEE activity and financial reports 2007 at the Eighth meeting of the ERI SEE Governing Board (Zagreb, Croatia, 21 April 2008).

The activity and financial report for the period January-November 2008, as well as the draft proposal of the ERI SEE Work Programme and budget 2009 were prepared for and presented at the Ninth meeting of the ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body (Podgorica, Montenegro, 1 December 2008). Based on the discussions and recommendations of the members of the ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body, the updated versions of the documents were prepared and submitted to the ERI SEE Governing Board for final approval (24 December 2008).