

REPORT

of the executive director of the ERI SEE Secretariat on the implementation of the ERI SEE 2005 working programme

As decided by the Senior Officials of the signatory ministries and the Governing Board members, the Secretariat of ERISSE is responsible for the implementation of the annual programs adopted by the Governing Board within the overall objective of integrating SEE countries into the evolving Wider European Area of Education through networking, exchange of information and experience, dissemination of good practice, organisation and delivery of seminars, training, workshops etc.

The present report intends to make a syntesis of the activities that have been organised or to be organised by the Secretariat of ERI SEE during the period January-December 2005, as well as a list of meetings/events where the Secretariat has been represented by the executive director.

I would like to emphasize the fact that all these activities have been designed and implemented with the strong support from my colleagues from the Task Force Education and Youth and our donors from Austria, Croatia, FYR of Macedonia, the Netherlands, Norway, Romania and Switzerland.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank to all Governing Board and Consultative Body members for the support offered in 2005 and for their committment to enhance regional cooperation and promote the European dimension in the educational and training systems from the South Eastern Europe.

Implementation of the ERI SEE 2005 working programme

The international workshop on "Participation to the Community programmes in the fields of education and training-an important tool for European integration", organised in Bucharest, 6-7 May 2005

The workshop has been organised by the ERI SEE Secretariat with the support of the Romanian Agency for Community Programmes in the field of education and training and the Romanian Ministry of Education and Research.

The following objectives have been envisaged to be achieved during the workshop: to present the ongoing Community programmes in the field of education and training, respectively Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci, as well as the administrative requirements for participation, to disseminate results, experiences and best practices, to discuss the relevance of participating in the Community programmes and to reflect on the ways to develop national capacities for managing the integrated Community programme.

A number of 27 experts have attended the workshop in Bucharest. The workshop also benefited of the experience and expertise of invited experts from Italy, Norway, Task Force Education and Youth/Enhanced Graz Process, Stability Pact Office and the EC Delegation in Bucharest.

The agenda of the workshop included presentations of the experts from Romania, Bulgaria and Norway on the participation into the Community programmes – Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci. Project promoters of Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci had introduced their experience, with the aim to give an image on the types of the projects that can be developed, management issues and results obtained. In the second day of the workshop, two working groups have been organized for developing a SWOT analysis and a preliminary action plan for participating into the Community programmes in the field of education, training and youth.

The second international workshop on "Participation to the Community programmes in the fields of education and training-an important tool for European integration", organised in Sofia, 30 September-1 November 2005

The agenda of the workshop envisaged sessions dedicated to project cycle management training, presentations of the experiences registered by Bulgaria, Romania and Norway, participating into the Community programmes – Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci and information on the latest developments at the Community level as regards the LLL programme.

A number of 13 experts, representing ministries of education from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, FYR of Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro- Rep of Serbia, Serbia and Montenegro- Rep. of Montenegro attended the meeting. We have also benefited from the experience of invited experts from Norway, the Netherlands, the Task Force Education and Youth/Enhanced Graz Process, Stability Pact Office and the European Commission - Directorate General Education and Culture.

Two sessions have been dedicated to the training in project cycle management. The training was performed by an international expert, contracted by the Bureau Cross, the Netherlands. The sessions combined the theoretical approach with practical exercises for a better understanding of the concepts and with the aim to build concepts using participants own experiences.

The updated information on the content and developments of the proposed Lifelong learning programme have been introduced by the representative of the European Commission- DG Education and Culture.

What we have achieved during the two seminars: there is a need for promoting awareness activities for the decision makers in the SEE on the preparation for participation to the LLL programme, the experts got information and training on project cycle management, team work and an active participation of the experts. The ERI SEE Secretariat collected best practices and experiences that have been shared and they are available on our website, draft action plans on dissemination and evaluation have been prepared and a consistent information on the structure and operational aspects related to LLL programme presented.

ERI SEE Senior Officials, Governing Board and Consultative Body meetings, 27-28 May 2005, Podgorica, Montenegro

The ERI SEE Senior Officials, Governing Board and Consultative Body meetings took place on **27- 28 May 2005, in Podgorica, Montenegro**, with the support of the Task Force Education and Youth and the Montenegrin Ministry of Education and Science.

It has been agreed to work on the the following directions to be developed in 2006:

- Continuing the preparation for participation in the Community Integrated Lifelong Learning Programme through capacity building measures
- Organizing thematic seminar: quality in education, skills development and quality assurance in VET, ICT in education, other seminar based on the request of the ministries
- Organizing the SOM and GB meetings
- Increasing the visibility of activities developed within ERI SEE

The Austrian Presidency of the European Union will facilitate the cooperation with the countries of the Western Balkans in the field of education and culture. Therefore, the **Spring Conference of the EU Ministers of Education 2006 – 16-17 March 2006**, will be linked with a conference emphasizing EU-relations with the Western Balkans: Ministers from Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, as well as Switzerland- one of the main donors in the region-are to be invited to participate in the conference.

The thematic Seminar "The Bologna Process after Bergen: the challenges of implementation", Bucharest, 1-2 July 2005

In accordance with the 2005 working programme, the ERI SEE Secretariat in partnership with the **European University Association (EUA) and UNESCO-European Centre for Higher Education (CEPES)** has organised in Bucharest, on 1-2 July 2005, the thematic seminar "*The Bologna Process after Bergen: the challenges of implementation*".

The topics of the seminar have been designed for the representatives of the ministries and higher education institutions from the South Eastern European countries, aiming to examine the forthcoming challenges faced by the higher education community in this region, respectively: the Bergen Declaration, Bologna Process and the status of implementation, study case: Croatia and Moldova, quality assurance, European and National Qualifications Framework, doctoral programmes and research, the social dimension in the EHEA.

The **conclusions** of the thematic seminar refer to the following issues:

- It is important that ministries and higher education institutions from the SEE to be active in Bologna follow-up process
- There is a need to ensure support to the newly entered countries-such as Moldova
- It is advisable to increase cooperation in the region with the aim as bringing common problems and solutions in the discussion that are organised across Europe
- Monitoring of change and following implementation, due to governmental changes in the region
- Encouraging a broader debate on education, seen as an investment in the society

Investing efficiently in education, 24-25 November 2005, Ohrid, Macedonia

There have been undertaken a lot of work in this field within the European Union and by the international organisations such as OECD, UNESCO or EUA and the topic has been considered of importance for the ministries of education from the South Eastern Europe.

A number of 33 experts, representing ministries of education from Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro- Rep of Serbia, Serbia and Montenegro- Rep. of Montenegro and Kosovo have attended the meeting. There have been also present experts from the European Training Foundation, the Netherlands and Norway, Kulturkontakt-Austria, OECD and Stability Pact.

Decentralisation was one of the main topics debated during the meeting. The experts participating to the seminar have agreed that without the political support and willingness of the Governments and local authorities, the process of decentralisation cannot be promoted. It is very important to combine decentralisation of the educational system with the reform of administration at local and national level. It is also important to work hard for changing mentalities and training of human resources involved in the process.

The implementation process is at different stages in each country, but there are some key issues that need to be followed and cooperation could be developed at regional level, such as: training strategies for managers, teachers and local authorities, development of the financial mechanisms as well as a quality assurance system.

ERI SEE Senior Officials Meeting, 25 November, Ohrid, Macedonia

One of the main instrument of the ERI SEE, the Senior Officials Meeting's agenda included a session dedicated to presentation of the European debates on European Qualification Framework, the programme of the Austrian Presidency in the first half of 2006, presentation of the results and recommendations made within the expert workshop on EQF-NQF organised by the Task Force on October 2005 in Vienna as well as the ERI SEE overview of 2005 and the thematic outlook for 2006.

Mr. Anton Dobart, the chair of the Task Force Education and Youth informed the senior officials on the programme that will be implemented during the Austrian Presidency in the first half of 2006. Under the headline "*Quality is the objective*", the Austrian Presidency will deal with the following dossiers: 2nd Joint Progress Report on the implementation of the Education&Training 2010 Work Programme, Lifelong Learning Programme, EQF: Towards a European Qualifications Framework in the field of Lifelong Learning, European Parliament and Council Recommendation: European Quality Charter for Mobility, Council

Conclusions on Language Competence Indicator, European Parliament and Council Recommendation: Key Competences for LLL and possible recommendation on Quality for Teacher Training.

The Task Force Education and Youth, in close cooperation with the Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe, has initiated a consultation process for SEE on the European Qualifications Framework. An expert workshop "Towards a European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning - Relevance, Feasibility and Implications for SEE" (Vienna, October 21st and 22nd 2005) offered a forum for a broad discussion on the topic. Participants were HE and VET experts from the SEE Ministries of Education, experts from EU member states, the European Training Foundation and the OECD, as well as from the European Commission. Priorities for development as well as measures for supporting the debates have been identified and presented to the ministries of education from the region.

ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body meeting, 26 November, Ohrid, Macedonia

During the third meeting of the ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body, the following topics have been discussed:

- Reports on establishment of the ERI SEE Secretariat
- Reports on ERI SEE activities – first semester 2005 (results of the workshop on LLL programme, Bucharest 6-7 May 2005),
- Preliminary financial issues 2005
- ERI SEE 2006 working programme
- Internal documents of the ERI SEE Agency

It is important to mention the support of the Governing Board and Consultative Body members offered for developing a relevant and sustainable 2006 working programme.

ICT seminar in education, 2-3 December 2005, Zagreb, Croatia

The seminar was developed based on a proposal and support offered by Bureau Cross-the Netherlands. A number of 19 experts, representing ministries of education from Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro- Rep of Serbia, Serbia and Montenegro- Rep. of Montenegro have attended the meeting. Experts from the Netherlands, CISCO System and SIVECO Romania were also present and had an input during the seminar.

As a general overview of the seminar, the following issues can be presented as results of the meeting:

- There are different stages of development of the ICT strategies – and based on experiences of the countries is easier to buy computers and software but it is hard to train and use the human resources in the most efficient way.
- The development of educational software is important for increasing the attractiveness of the subjects taught in the classroom and an important tool for the teaching
- Financing of the ICT strategies at national level is a problem that may jeopardize the success of the implementation process. Sustainability of the process is crucial for the success of the national programmes developed by the Ministries of education from the region. The *private-public partnership* developed with solid companies could be a solution in the region together with the support from the local authorities.
- The role of teachers and teacher training in ICT are of utmost importance for the success of a national ICT strategy.
- For comparing the situation in the SEE and ensuring monitoring tools for the process of implementation is necessary to support the use and development of indicators as well as collecting the relevant data
- There is a gap in Europe between the demand and the offer on experts for networking. The survey conducted by CISCO provided some important results for educational systems in Europe and results could be extrapolated for the SEE. The development of CISCO Academies for teachers and training could be a solution for training of human resources necessary for networking.

Expertise

In the process of implementing the 2005 working programme, the ERI SEE Secretariat benefited of the important support offered by international experts or representatives of ministries of education members of the Consultative Body. In this context, I would like to mention the Netherlands and Norway as well as the European Training Foundation, European University Association, UNESCO-CEPES, European Commission and Italy.

The Norwegian experience on participating to the Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci programme as well as on financing the education has been shared with the participating experts from the SEE by the representatives of the Ministry of Education and Research, Mrs. Lene Oftedal and Mrs. Else Johanne Husa, offering a valuable contribution to the success of the meetings and an important view of the position of a non-EU countries, but fully participating to the Community programmes.

The Bureau Cross, acting on behalf of the Dutch Ministry of Education and Research was an important partner, providing experts in different educational fields approached during the ERI SEE seminars. We have benefited of the experience and expertise of Mr. Ton Farla, an international expert that provided the basic training on the project cycle management for the nominated representatives of the ministries of education to deal with Community programmes, Mr. Jan Schraven- sharing the Dutch example on private-public partnership in education and Mr. Hans Pelgrum-presenting the debates and recommendation of European experts regarding the use of ICT in education- the role of teachers and teacher training in ICT as well as the Dutch strategy on ICT.

We consider all these contributions of utmost importance because it helped the ERI SEE Secretariat to achieve its mandate in 2005: "*Through fostering regional co-operation and facilitating capacity building and know-how transfer, ERI SEE promotes common European standards in education, also in the light of the ongoing EU integration process of the region*".

Preliminary results of ERI SEE activities

The ERI SEE Secretariat was preoccupied to receive the feedback from the experts attending our meeting on several issues, starting with content to organizational issues. We have used a feedback questionnaire and the preliminary results indicate the following:

- It appears that almost all the participants were satisfied about the content of the training, delivery and overall added value of the training
- The ERI SEE Secretariat provided a good learning environment and the participants were satisfied with the presentations made during the workshops
- The training and information provided are useful for their professional activities
- The topics chosen were included in the political agenda of the ministries of education from the SEE and are relevant for the educational reform
- Some of the participants to the capacity building activities for preparing participation to LLL programme have been nominated to deal with the negotiation for participation to LLL.

Visibility of the ERI SEE Secretariat

Electronic ERI SEE Newsletter

The first issue of the electronic ERI SEE Newsletter has been sent out at the end of March 2005.

The main topics included in the Newsletter are: ERI SEE Working Programme for 2005, background information on ERI SEE structure and aims, information on the international conference "*Governance and Education for Sustainable Development and European Integration*" organized by the TFEY and held in Graz on January 28-29, 2005, future activities to be organised until June 2005: workshop on Community programmes, SOM and GB meetings in Montenegro and higher education seminar

The electronic Newsletter has been sent to the following target groups: ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body members, ERI SEE SOM representatives, participants to the international conference "*Governance and Education for Sustainable Development and European Integration*", Kulturkontakt Educational coordinators and other representatives.

New web site for the ERI SEE Secretariat

In cooperation with TFEY and with the kind support of the SEE_ECN, the Secretariat is benefiting of a new connection to the documents related to TFEY and ERI SEE Secretariat activities: www.erisee.org.

Participation to the international seminars, conferences and events

International Conference "Governance and Education for Sustainable Development and European Integration", Graz, 28-29 January 2005

The international conference "*Governance and Education for Sustainable Development and European Integration*" organized by the TFEY and held in Graz on January 28-29 2005 was designed to offer a wide platform for communication between SEE, international organizations and EU educational and training institutions.

Apart from evaluating the work of TFEY in the past five years, the conference was an excellent opportunity to review education in a wider context, namely in terms of the role of governance in education for economic development, social cohesion, innovation, culture

and diversity. During the conference, it was offered the opportunity to present the ERI SEE Secretariat, the 2005 working programme and to discuss with ERI SEE stakeholders.

ETF Peer Reviews on implementation of VET policy in South Eastern Europe and dissemination of the Copenhagen Process, Zagreb, 17-18 February 2005

The purpose of the conference was to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the peer review process in the first countries discussing outcomes at a high level regional conference, and to disseminate the Copenhagen Process. The conference was cofounded by the Italian Government through the Italian Trust Fund.

Ministers, international experts and representatives from eighteen countries met in Zagreb to review progress made in the reform of vocational education and training (VET) by countries seeking to join the EU. Peer reviews have been undertaken in Albania, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia in 2002 and Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Romania and Turkey in 2003. The representatives of the ERI SEE Secretariat and TFEY were rapporteurs in two workshops organised during the meeting.

Donor Cooperation meeting on education and training 2010- dissemination to SEE, Turin, 18 April 2005

The meeting was organised by ETF with participation of Bureau Cross on behalf of the Dutch Ministry of Education and Research, ERI SEE Secretariat, Kulturkontakt-Austria and TFEY. The purpose of the meeting was to find common ground for activities related to dissemination of EU discussions to South Eastern Europe. The focus was on what we can do together in 2006.

International conference "Training for employability workshop- Attracting investment and increasing employment in South Eastern Europe by enhancing labour force skills", Thessaloniki, 21-22 April 2005

The conference was organised by the Stability Pact Office and the European Training Foundation with the support of European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) and OECD/Investment Compact for South East Europe.

The event brought together officials and experts from the Stability Pact initiatives including the Investment Compact, the Initiative for Social Cohesion (the Bucharest Employment Process and the Social Dialogue sector) as well as representatives from bilateral donors and international organizations involved in these areas, such as the World Bank, the

Council of Europe, the European Commission, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the European Investment Bank and the International Labour Organization.

Participation to the Meetings of the three Working Tables and the Regional Table, Sofia, 16-18 May 2005

In the period 16-18 May 2005, under the organisation of the Stability Pact Office, the meetings of the three working tables and regional table took place in Sofia, Bulgaria.

The main objective of these meetings was to enhance regional ownership of Stability Pact activities. During the meeting of the working table 1 there were presentations on the status of activities and projects developed by the task forces: education and youth, local governance, gender issues and Parliamentary co-operation. Recommendations on education and youth have been agreed during the working table 1 meeting and presented by Mr. Goran Svilanovic in the plenary of the regional table. The recommendations envisage a stronger and active participation of the SEE countries in the field of education, support for ERI SEE Secretariat and involvement in the European debates on education and training.

Participation to the conference "Achieving Lisbon 2010 Goals: Contribution of TVET in Romania", 7-8 October, Eforie Nord, Romania

The Romanian Ministry of Education and Research organized the final Conference of the project on the Modernization of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training – Phare TVET RO 2002/000- 586.05.01.02.01.01, on 7th and 8th October, 2005. The purpose of the Conference was to disseminate the outcomes of the project and to highlight the perspectives of the TVET modernization, in the context of achieving the objectives of Lisbon-2010 strategy.

The conference brought together decision makers and experts of similar TVET institutions in Romania and other countries, from other governmental and non-governmental institutions involved at national, regional and local level, representatives of social partners and media, in order to ensure a large debate on TVET management and governance, in view of ensuring economic and social cohesion, in the perspective of Romania's Accession to the European Union. Participants from neighbouring countries have been invited to attend the Conference for sharing their experience on the issues debated, in particular on quality assurance.

Participation to the expert workshop „Towards a European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning”, 21-22 October 2005, Vienna, Austria

Under the organisation of the Task Force Education and Youth, the expert seminar intended to give the opportunity of the experts from the SEE to work together and debate the issues included in the Commission Working paper on European Qualification Framework.

The expert seminar brought together experts in VET and higher education from all the ministries of education signatory of the Memorandum of Understanding in order to prepare a set of recommendations for the ministers of education that will attend the ministerial conference, to be organised on March 2006, under the Austrian Presidency of the European Council.

The recommendations made by the experts during the working groups that have been organised were presented during the ERI SEE Senior Officials Meeting on 25 November 2005 in Ohrid, Macedonia.

Participation to the Meetings of the three Working Tables and the Regional Table, Prague, 16-18 November 2005

The main objective of these meetings was to enhance regional ownership of Stability Pact activities. During the meeting of the working table 1, where Task Force Education and Youth and ERI SEE Secretariat is placed, there were presentations on the status of activities and projects developed by the task forces: education and youth, local governance, gender issues and Parliamentary co-operation.

A keynote speech on importance of education and investment in education for economic and social development of the countries from the region has been delivered by Mr. Gazo Knezevic, former minister of education from Serbia and Montenegro. The ERI SEE Secretariat and its activities have been mentioned in the papers delivered by the Stability Pact Office as well as in the speeches of Mr. Erhard Busek, the Special Co-ordinator of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe and Mr. Goran Svilanovic, chair of the working table I.

Recommendations on education and youth have been agreed during the working table 1 meeting and presented by Mr. Goran Svilanovic in the plenary of the regional table. The recommendations envisage a stronger and active participation of the SEE countries in the field of education, support for ERI SEE Secretariat and the need for involvement in the ongoing European debates on education and training.