



January 2009

ERI SEE Work Programme 2009

Executive Summary

In the year 2009 the Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE) will continue to function as a regional platform for co-operation in the education area and to serve as an interface between ongoing national reforms in South Eastern Europe (SEE), the current trends and developments in the education sector at EU level and to support capacity building and knowledge transfer relevant for the ongoing EU integration process of the region. The ERI SEE activities will also address the more global developments in education and training, to which the SEE countries have committed themselves.

The work of ERI SEE will focus on activities relevant for achieving the five outputs foreseen for the period 2008-2010.

Output 1: ERI SEE members are informed on life long learning (LLL) initiatives in the region and had the opportunity to develop a common strategy

- Seminar 1: Writing of project proposal, terms of reference and project fiche (IPA and ENPI).
- Seminar 4 - Meeting of the network of national VET agencies and institutions of SEE: 'Quality of Education in the Context of Lifelong Learning and its Role in the Development of National Qualifications Frameworks'.
- Establishment of expert network in lifelong learning, including participation to Workshop 3 on advanced training of e-moderators.
- Update of the information on lifelong learning on the ERI SEE web site.

Output 2: Information on the European Qualification Framework and on the development of National Qualifications Frameworks in the SEE region has been provided

- Information exchange within the Governing Board and among experts on Qualification Frameworks, including Workshop 3 on advanced training of e-moderators.
- Providing relevant information on Qualification Frameworks on the ERI SEE web site.

- Synergy of the activities with the Council of Europe and the European Training Foundation.
- Workshop 1: Participatory evaluation of a project concept on sectoral qualifications in tourism (IVET, CVET, HE).

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

- Seminar 2: Teacher training for inclusive education/teacher training for diversity.
- Seminar 3: Assessment and evaluation in SEE versus future challenges.
- Continuation of the internet forum on assessment and evaluation in primary and secondary education including Workshop 3 on advanced training on e-moderation.
- Continuation of internet forum on quality assurance in education including Workshop 3 on advanced training on e-moderation.
- Provision of relevant information on quality and equity in education on the ERI SEE website.

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

- Participation to the Conference on Building Human Capital (Bucharest-Romania, 6-7 March 2009).
- Seminar 5: The role of teacher education and the pre-university sector in building human capital by fostering creativity and innovation – Follow-up to the Bucharest Conference.
- Enabling efficient networking of Bologna Process actors including participation to Workshop 3 on advanced training of e-moderators.
- Placement 1: Support the networking and peer-learning among SEE bodies of quality assurance in higher education.
- Providing relevant information on the 'knowledge triangle' on the ERI SEE web site.

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

- Organisation of ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body meetings.
- Workshop 2: How to operate a national ERI SEE contact point.
- Enhanced ERI SEE visibility and networking.
- Improvement of the ERI SEE web site.
- Office management and administration.
- Planning and reporting activities.
- Review and improvement of the existing methodology for evaluation of the impact of ERI SEE activities at national level.

1. JUSTIFICATION

In the year 2009, the Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE) will continue to function as a regional platform for co-operation in the education area and to serve as an interface between ongoing national reforms in South Eastern Europe (SEE), the current trends and developments in the education sector at EU level and to support capacity building and knowledge transfer relevant for the ongoing EU integration process of the region.

Wherever and whenever possible, the ERI SEE activities will address the more global developments in education and training, to which the SEE countries have committed themselves (e.g. the World Declaration on Education for All and the Dakar Framework for Action¹, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child², as well as the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005 - 2014³).

In 2009, the ERI SEE work will be correlated and influenced by the increased ownership of the process of regional cooperation (the work of the Regional Cooperation Council located in Sarajevo and its Task Force Fostering and Building Human Capital).

As decided by the Senior Officials of the signatory ministries and the Governing Board members, and in accordance with the stipulations of the founding documents, the ERI SEE Agency⁴ 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.

2. ERI SEE ACTIVITIES 2009

The work of ERI SEE will focus on activities relevant for achieving the increased role of education and training in the development of the SEE countries by implementing activities in line with the defined ERI SEE outputs 2008-2010.

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

Background

South East European commitment to lifelong learning: In May 2007 the Ministers of SEE responsible for education, science and research signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)⁵ and renew their commitment to regional cooperation. The MoU encompasses all aspects of education in the context of lifelong learning, research and

¹ The Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All: Meeting our Collective Commitments, World Education Forum, Dakar-Senegal, April 2000

² Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by the UN General Assembly resolution 44/25, November 1989

³ Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, United Nations, Johannesburg-South Africa, August-September 2002

⁴ Agencija za obrazovno reformske inicijative za jugoistočnu Europu, Zagreb, Republic of Croatia

⁵ Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministers Responsible for Education, Science and Research in South Eastern Europe, Istanbul, May 2007

innovation. With this document, the Ministers enhanced their commitment to the re-launched Lisbon agenda as the main driving force for reforms in education, science and research in SEE. The countries are committed to and are involved in the implementation of the 'Education & Training 2010' work programme (depending on the status of their integration or rapprochement to the EU), the Copenhagen process and the Bologna process.

These commitments oblige the ERI SEE countries to work on the development of lifelong learning strategies, thus setting out national policy priorities and defining how different sectors relate to each other. The lifespan education and training starting from pre-primary education; qualification frameworks; validation of non-formal and informal learning; skills for the future and key competences; innovative learning partnerships and sustainable funding for high quality, efficient and equitable education & training; promotion of creativity through lifelong learning and lifelong guidance are to be addressed with these overarching documents. Bulgaria and Romania as EU Member States and Croatia as a candidate country are subject to assessment of the progress against the five reference levels of average European performance and other key indicators in education and training. All SEE countries are involved in the Bologna process reporting and stock-taking processes. In January 2008⁶, Bulgaria and Romania were in the process of developing national lifelong learning strategies. Croatia has a national lifelong learning strategy and has established an Agency for Lifelong Learning. Croatia, Kosovo, the Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia have developed adult learning strategies or policy papers⁷ with the following priority areas identified: development of work-based learning, particularly management and entrepreneurship training for small businesses and development of special programmes to address particular skill shortages; improvement of basic literacy and occupational skills including key competences; expansion and development of active labour market measures for the registered unemployed and inactive people seeking work. Development of the national system of lifelong learning is a priority within the overall educational policy of Moldova⁸.

In 2009 - the European year of creativity - the ERI SEE countries will debate on how to enhance the contribution of lifelong learning to creativity and innovation in society and on strengthening the innovative approaches and culture of better learning⁹.

In the period 2007-2013, the Western Balkans countries will be involved in the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), and Moldova will be covered with the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI). Human resources development will be in the focus of the countries, both as part of the efforts for economic growth and development, as well as in the framework of preparation for participation in the European Social and Regional Funds. The current high level of unemployment needs to be addressed by greater social and economic development, and therefore increased job creation. In the IPA multiannual planning documents 2007-2009 and 2009-2011 the following priority areas have been identified: creation of conducive environments for employment friendly economic growth (which requires an integrated approach among Social-Economic Development, Employment and Education through an effective inter-ministerial cooperation, as well as involvement of social partners and civil society); enhancement of the skills of the

⁶ Draft 2008 joint progress report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the 'Education & Training 2010' work programme 'Developing lifelong learning for knowledge, creativity and innovation', Council of the European Union, 5723/08, Brussels, January 2008

⁷ Designing Adult Learning Strategies – the Case of South Eastern Europe, European Training Foundation, Turin, 2006.

⁸ Bologna Process National Report of Moldova, Kishinev, 2007.

⁹ Decision No 1350/2008/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the European Year of Creativity and Innovation (2009), 16 December 2008.

population in line with the requirement of a market economy and support to the most vulnerable groups of the society - people with special needs, minorities and women.

By enabling networking of people working in different aspects of lifelong learning, ERI SEE will support the exchange of experiences and mutual learning. In 2008, priority was given to enabling a dialogue among the national VET agencies on lifelong learning and development of national qualifications frameworks. The First Networking Conference of the VET agencies and institutions of SEE (Tirana-Albania, September 2008) enabled discussion on both topics. The Conference initiated the networking among the VET agencies and institutions of SEE which continued at the Conference 'Implementation strategies for national qualifications frameworks in South Eastern Europe' (Ankara-Turkey, 17-18 December 2008). The SEE countries agreed the respective VET institutions acting in the SEECP region to sign a Cooperation Agreement in 2009. ERI SEE will support the future activities of the network.

Programmes in education and training: From the year 2007, all ERI SEE countries (Western Balkans and Moldova) continued their participation in the European Community Programme Tempus. The new, fourth phase of Tempus encourages regional cooperation. Under the 'Western Balkans windows' of the Erasmus Mundus programme, 100 scholarships for postgraduate students following master courses were awarded in the academic year 2007/2008. Up to 500 scholarships for students at all levels or academic staff under the 'external cooperation window' were available in the academic year 2008/2009 and the support will continue in the academic year 2009/2010. The ERI SEE countries will be involved in the second phase of Erasmus Mundus 2009-2013¹⁰ with changed status. All SEE countries except Moldova will be 'European countries'. Moldova will participate in the Erasmus Mundus 2009-2013 action programme as a third country.

As candidate countries, Croatia and the Republic of Macedonia have adopted the legal frameworks for the national agencies for administering the Community Action Programme in the field of Lifelong Learning 2007-2013 (Programme LLL) and have started the process of staffing and capacity building of the new structures. In 2008, the European Commission committed to adopt a Communication by which the potential candidate countries will participate on equal terms with candidate countries in Community programmes.

The complexity of the relationships and responsibilities between the European Commission, the National Authorities and the National Agencies calls for regional cooperation and support from the European countries previously involved in the Community programmes for education and training with the objective for capacity building of the national authorities and different categories of experts for taking over the obligations emerging from the participation in the Community Programme LLL.

The Regional seminar 'Use of Project Cycle Management – an important tool for successful co-operation in the fields of education and training' (Belgrade-Serbia, October 2008) provided recommendations which also built on the expertise of the lead expert (60 projects in education and training evaluated so far):

- 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.

¹⁰ Decision No 1298/2008/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on establishing the Erasmus Mundus 2009-2013 action programme for the enhancement of quality in higher education and the promotion of intercultural understanding through cooperation with third countries, 16 December 2008.

- A rigorous Project Cycle Management 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 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.
- Knowledge on European Commission (EC) procedures and EC support programmes.
- Writing Terms of Reference and other programming documents such as project fiche.

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

Activities proposed:

2.1.1. Seminar 1: Writing of project proposals, terms of reference and project fiche (IPA and ENPI)

In order to support the on-going intensive work on preparation of project proposals under the IPA and ENPI, as well as of project proposals to be supported from different financial sources, ERI SEE will organise a seminar on writing project proposals, terms of reference and project fiche. Around 20 participants from respective Ministries and other SEE institutions as well as experts from the donor countries will take part and will contribute to the seminar.

2.1.2. Seminar 4 - Meeting of the network of national VET agencies and institutions of SEE: 'Quality of Education in the Context of Lifelong Learning and its Role in the Development of National Qualifications Frameworks'

The networking of the VET agencies and institutions of SEE initiated at the First Networking Conference (Tirana-Albania, September 2008) will continue supported by ERI SEE and the European Training Foundation. In 2009 the network will address the quality of education in the context of lifelong learning and its role in the development of National Qualifications Frameworks.

2.1.3. Establishment of expert network in lifelong learning, including participation to Workshop 3 on advanced training of e-moderators

Lifelong learning is increasingly becoming a high priority area in SEE. The recent IPA and ENPI documents have foreseen substantial interventions in this area. ERI SEE will support the professional communication, exchange of experience and peer-learning among the SEE experts by establishing an internet forum on lifelong learning.

The forum moderator will take part to Workshop 3 on advanced training on e-moderation (in which all ERI SE moderators and the IT assistant of the ERI SEE Agency will be involved), during which a special session will be organised for the ERI SEE moderators who will establish the forums in 2009.

2.1.4. Update of the information on lifelong learning on the ERI SEE web site

The library of documents on lifelong learning available on the ERI SEE web page will be updated in 2009.

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

Background

The European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong learning (EQF/LLL) enabled co-existence with the overarching Framework for Qualifications in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The descriptors in the EQF/LLL are generic and can be used to describe all types of learning. Reference to the Bologna descriptors is integrated in the EQF/LLL. The work of the ERI SEE countries on the development of National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF) takes into consideration the solutions provided in the EQF/LLL.

The European ministers responsible for higher education (including all ERI SEE countries) reported in London 2007 that work on national qualifications frameworks (NQF) has started and that efforts will be increased in order the countries to complete the frameworks by 2010. In London, the Ministers mandated the Council of Europe for dissemination and share of good practice in the development of NQFs. Thanks to the intensive awareness raising campaign on the Copenhagen Process in 2005-2006¹¹, most Western Balkans countries have started intensive discussions and reforms are taking place for the establishment of NQFs in VET and Higher Education (adoption of national legislation in Albania, Croatia, Montenegro etc; development of national strategies in majority of SEE countries; establishment of national structures e.g. Croatia;) etc. Romania is a SEE country which is well advanced in the development of the NQF with well functioning national structures.

Regional cooperation supported by European countries that already have made substantial progress in developing their NQF or are in the process of developing the NQF, including cooperation with neighbouring countries of SEE (e.g. Hungary), the European Training Foundation and the European Commission would contribute to capacities building and development of NQFs in accordance with the EQF/LLL. The effort of the region needs support, inter alia by peer learning activities at EU level, by provision of expertise through European institutions, etc.

The conclusions from the special ERI SEE session organised in the framework of the International conference 'Education and Training: social and economic benefits within a lifelong learning perspective' (Sinaia-Romania, October 2007) stipulated:

- The process of development and implementation of NQFs is to be based on permanent dialogue between the education sectors (VET and HE in particular), the labour market, trade unions and other stakeholders.
- The NQFs developed should be characterised with flexibility, simplicity, applicability and visibility.
- Joint work of the VET and HE sector in development of NQF is crucial if the objective is to be achieved for covering the lifelong learning continuum of education and training of each citizen.
- Credits that allow transfer and accumulation should be allocated in a way that will ensure progress and recognition of prior learning.

The status quo and the on-going processes of development of NQFs were discussed at the First Networking Conference of the VET agencies and institutions of SEE (Tirana-Albania,

¹¹ The European Training Foundation had the leading role in this campaign.

September 2008) and at the Ankara Conference 'Implementation strategies for national qualifications frameworks in South Eastern Europe' (December 2008). The newly established VET network of the SEECP region adopted the development of NQFs is an area relevant for mutual learning and joint actions.

Activities proposed:

2.2.1. Information exchange within the Governing Board and among experts on Qualifications Frameworks, including Workshop 3 on advanced training of e-moderators

The practice of exchange of information on the European developments in the field of qualifications frameworks and briefings on the progress in the ERI SEE region will continue. The members of the ERI SEE Consultative Body from the Council of Europe and the European Training Foundation, as well as the members of the ERI SEE Governing Board will discuss this topic during the Eleventh Governing Board and Consultative Body meeting in October 2009.

NQFs are increasingly becoming a high priority area in SEE. The recent IPA and ENPI documents have foreseen substantial interventions in this area. ERI SEE will support the professional communication, exchange of experience and peer-learning among the SEE experts by establishing an internet forum on NQFs.

The forum moderator will take part to Workshop 3 on advanced training on e-moderation (with involvement of all ERI SE moderators and the IT assistant of the ERI SEE Agency), during which a special session will be organised for the ERI SEE moderators who will establish the forums in 2009.

2.2.2. Providing relevant information on Qualification Frameworks on the ERI SEE web site

The library of documents on qualifications frameworks available on the ERI SEE web page will be updated in 2009.

2.2.3. Synergy of the activities with the Council of Europe and the European Training Foundation

The Council of Europe, the European Training Foundation and ERI SEE will continue the cooperation and will continue the coordination of the activities in the region. This coordination will not be limited to qualifications frameworks, but will address all areas of education and training in which the three institutions are developing and implementing different activities. For activities for which joint work would lead to added value, the institutions will develop appropriate partnerships.

2.2.4. Workshop 1: Participatory evaluation of a project concept on sectoral qualifications in tourism (IVET, CVET, HE)

In order to support the development of the project concept for support to the development of sectoral qualifications in tourism (IVET, CVET and HE), ERI SEE will organise a workshop (Workshop 1). Experts involved in the projects supported by KulturKontakt Austria on modernisation of tourism education in Albania, Croatia and Romania, as well as from other SEE countries, will be invited to take part in the working session and to contribute to the development of the concept of the project.

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

Background

Building a quality culture is in the core of the Bologna and Copenhagen processes. This is a top level priority for the SEE countries, too.

The SEE countries work on the implementation of the Common Criteria and Principles for Quality in VET in the framework of the Copenhagen Process, as well as of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area and the Recommendation on Quality Assurance in Higher Education¹² adopted by the EU Council of ministers and the European Parliament within the Bologna Process. Improved quality of the education and research sectors is important for the development of the European Area of Knowledge and Europe's competitiveness.

As Bologna signatories, the SEE countries provide information on the developments in the field of quality assurance within the regular stocktaking and national reporting processes.

The SEE countries are interested, and some have taken the necessary steps for involvement in the ENQA and ENQA VET networks and have expressed interest for active involvement in capacity building measures undertaken by both networks. The current quality assurance systems in higher education and VET vary across the countries of the region, depending on the societal constructions, specific contexts and institutional environments. The countries have agreed to strengthen the regional cooperation by sharing of experiences, good practice, tools and instruments in quality assurance in HE and VET. They recognise the need for developing a pool of quality assurance experts from the region that (upon invitation) would be involved in external evaluation or would participate in the quality assurance bodies of different countries.

By addressing different aspects of assessment and evaluation in primary and secondary education on a regular basis since 2006, ERI SEE has contributed to developing a network of experts from the region who recognise the Initiative as a platform which supports mutual learning, exchange of experience and practice. The establishment of the ERI SEE internet forum on assessment and evaluation (2008) enabled use of this medium for permanent support to the network. The experience so far has proved the relevance of the continuity of the support to the networking by organising seminars/workshops on topics relevant for improvement of the processes of assessment and evaluation in SEE. At the regional seminar on Matura exams (Sofia-Bulgaria, December 2008) the topic of the networking seminar in 2009 was agreed: 'Assessment and evaluation in SEE versus future challenges'.

As recommended at the ERI SEE round table on accreditation and evaluation in SEE (Zagreb-Croatia, June 2007), the SEE experts had to opportunity for a special meeting side by side with the CEEN General Assembly meeting and workshop (Durrës-Albania, May 2008). By acknowledging that quality assurance in higher education is an area where 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:

¹² Recommendation on Quality Assurance in Higher Education (2006/143/EC)

- 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, too.
- Building expertise for external evaluation is to become a field for capacity building measures in the coming years. ERI SEE 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. 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 is 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.

By establishing the internet forum on quality assurance (2008), ERI SEE enabled use of this medium for sustaining the networking of SEE experts.

Quality assurance goes hand in hand with efficiency and equity in the education and training systems. The Communication from the European Commission to the Council and to the European Parliament 'Efficiency and equity in European education and training systems'¹³ addresses topics relevant for shaping the future regional cooperation in SEE. The report from the OECD Thematic Reviews on equal opportunity for education 'No More Failures-Ten Steps to Equity in Education' provides useful recommendations for policy development and implementation on the ERI SEE countries, too. Education and training policies can have a significantly positive impact on economic and social outcomes, including sustainable development and social cohesion. Inequities in education and training have huge hidden costs. Policies

¹³ Commission of the European Communities: Communication from the Commission to the Council and to the European Parliament 'Efficiency and equity in European education and training systems', COM(2006) 481 final.

which reduce such costs can deliver equity and efficiency benefits. Pre-primary education has the highest rates of return of the whole lifelong learning continuum, especially for the most disadvantaged, and the results of this investment build up over time. Spending policies targeted at reinforcing early education and tackling disadvantage from the earliest age are highly effective in efficiency and equity terms and justify high priority in the allocation of public and private expenditure. There is a need to increase the number of specially trained pre-primary teachers. Pre-service and in-service teacher training has direct impact on increased efficiency and equity of the systems.

Under the component 'capacity building activities for model schools', the OECD work under the project 'Education Development for Students at Risk and those with Disabilities in South Eastern Europe' (2003 – 2007), has contributed to raising the quality of the work of the model schools, including the learning process. Systematic teacher training was one of the recommendations of the International Conference 'Education Policies for Inclusion in South Eastern Europe: Challenges and Opportunities' (Vienna–Austria, 2007) which was organised in framework of this project. Among other recommendations, the ERI SEE seminar on equity in education (Prishtina-UNMIK Kosovo, October 2007) stipulated the necessity for systematic teacher training for inclusive education and teacher training for diversity in SEE. At the 8th meeting of the ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body (Zagreb, April 2008) organisation of a regional seminar on teacher training for inclusive education/teacher training for diversity was agreed for 2009.

Activities proposed:

2.3.1. Seminar 2: Teacher training for inclusive education/teacher training for diversity

The role of the teachers in the SEE countries where the need for inclusive education is equally important as the role of the education in education of citizens for living in diversified societies reach with cultural differences has been widely recognised. The seminar will bring together 20-25 participants and experts from SEE, the donor countries and the OECD.

2.3.2. Seminar 3: Assessment and evaluation in South Eastern Europe versus future challenges

The seminar will enable continuation of the regional networking of experts in the field of assessment and evaluation in education. As agreed in Sofia-Bulgaria (December 2008), the seminar will address the novelties in the field of assessment and evaluation in primary and secondary education and the challenges for SEE.

2.3.3. Continuation of the internet forum on assessment and evaluation in primary and secondary education, including participation to the Workshop 3 on advanced training on e-moderation

The internet forum established in 2008 will continue to function as a regional platform which provides support to networking of experts in assessment and evaluation in primary and secondary education. In order to enable good quality moderation, ERI SEE will support participation of the moderator of this forum to the workshop on advanced training on e-moderation which will involve the moderators of all ERI SEE internet forums and the IT assistant of the ERI SEE Agency (Workshop 3).

2.3.4. Continuation of the internet forum on quality assurance in education, including participation to Workshop 3 on advanced training on e-moderation

The internet forum established in 2008 will continue to function as a regional platform which provides support to regional networking of experts in quality assurance. In order to enable good quality moderation, ERI SEE will support participation of the

moderator of this forum to the workshop on advanced training on e-moderation which will involve the moderators of all ERI SEE internet forums and the IT assistant of the ERI SEE Agency (Workshop 3).

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

The library of documents on quality and equity in education available on the ERI SEE web page will be updated in 2009.

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

Background

Growth and creation of jobs are common goals of the SEE countries. Innovation and creativity in the economy are closely connected with the quality and efforts made within education and research. In the knowledge triangle of education, research and innovation, education and higher education play a special role in promoting European standards in education and training, especially in the countries of the Western Balkans¹⁴. Governments, higher education institutions and students share the common objective of creating a European Higher Education and Research Area, and of supporting the fundamentals of the Lisbon Strategy that knowledge societies and economies can only be realised through strong and socially responsive higher education institutions¹⁵. In 2008, the Slovenian Presidency of the EU Council has put building innovative and creative knowledge-based society in a position to be the first of the four priority areas identified at the 2006 Spring European Council¹⁶.

Based on the Conclusions of Working Table I of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe¹⁷ and the Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministers responsible for Education, Science and Research in SEE¹⁸, the Task Force Building Human Capital (TFBHC) of the Regional Cooperation Council was established in the first half of 2008¹⁹. The TFBHC promotes coherency and coordination between education, higher education and research by creating a platform for dialogue and cooperation of actors involved in these sectors.

The TFBHC within the framework of the South Eastern European Regional Coordination Process is the organiser of the International Conference 'Fostering and Building Human Capital for Sustainable Knowledge Societies in South Eastern Europe' (Bucharest-Romania, 6-7 March 2009). The Conference will bring together decision makers from European institutions and international organisations, Ministries of Education, Science and Research, Labour and Social Affairs from SEE, non-governmental organisations active in

¹⁴ 'Strengthening Education in Europe' – Final Communiqué on the Outcome of Discussions on 17 March 2006 – IX Conference of European Ministers of Education.

¹⁵ 'Strengthening Higher Education and Research in South East Europe – Priorities for regional and European Cooperation' – Conclusions and recommendations for action adopted by participants to the EUA meeting in March 2006.

¹⁶ Presidency Conclusions, Council of the European Union, Brussels European Council 23/24 March 2006, 7775/1/06.

¹⁷ Conclusions of Working Table I of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, Bucharest, November 2006.

¹⁸ Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministers responsible for Education, Science and research in South Eastern Europe, Istanbul, May 2007.

¹⁹ Proposal for the profile and structure of the Task Force 'Fostering and Building Human Capital', Task Force Education and Youth of the Stability Pact, Vienna, April 2008.

the field of building human capital, education experts, researchers, the Regional Cooperation Council, international donors and media representatives. The main objective of the Conference is to debate on the changing role of human capital for the development of sustainable knowledge economies and societies as well as for its inclusion into the Enlarged Europe. The counties signatories of the Istanbul Memorandum of Understanding will have delegations and the members of the ERI SEE Governing Board will also take part to the Conference.

In line with the increased role of the knowledge triangle, the ERI SEE countries have committed themselves to work on:

- *Implementation of the Bologna Process* – Increase of the number of students acquiring quality higher education and developing higher education systems offering more opportunities and a more diverse tertiary education should become the basis for European and regional cooperation. Areas where regional cooperation could be strengthened for the benefit of all and which are fully in line with the Bologna objectives are: quality assurance, recognition, as well as promotion of mobility of students, academic and administrative staff. With regard to the social dimension of the Bologna Process and taking into consideration the inequality of opportunities of the students, academic and administrative staff, active involvement of the institutions and students from the region in the European cooperation programmes is necessary (e.g. the Erasmus Mundus Western Balkans window and the new scholarship scheme for the European Neighbourhood Policy region under Erasmus Mundus and CEEPUS).
- *Development of research and innovation* – The EU Communication on the Western Balkans²⁰ proposed increased efforts to support research and researchers with the objective to decrease the flow of qualified researchers out of the region. The participation of the universities, research institutions and researchers from the Western Balkans countries in the 7th Framework Programme could increase if proper measures for capacity building and human resources development are undertaken e.g. re-enforcing support to national contact points and training of research managers. There is strong potential for regional and European capacity building cooperation in this field. The regional cooperation will build on the existing initiatives such as ERI SEE and the Steering Platform on Research for the Western Balkan countries and the successfully functioning networks of institutions from the EU Member States, Accession and Pre – accession countries like the SEE-ERA.NET and the Western Balkans Countries INCO-NET.
- *Institutional reforms and development* – The countries of the region will be successful in reaching the global goal to contribute to the development of a knowledge based society if the governments exercise trust in institutions and provide incentives for reform. The education institutions need to be autonomous and accountable to society and to work on improving their governance structures and management. There is a strong potential for regional cooperation in this domain. ERI SEE will seek for synergy with the activities undertaken in the framework of the 'Novi Sad Initiative'.

In 2009 - the European Year of Creativity and Innovation – the modernisation of the European higher education²¹ seeks for responding to the needs of the society, including

²⁰ Communication from the Commission 'The Western Balkans on the road to the EU: consolidation stability and raising prosperity', COM(2006) 27 final.

²¹ European Commission (2006c), Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European parliament: 'Delivering on the modernisation agenda for universities: Education, Research and Innovation'. COM(2006) 208 final, 10.5.2006.

innovativeness. Increased understanding on the role of teacher education and the pre-university sector in building human capital by fostering creativity and innovation is essential for the innovative capacity of Europe including the ERI SEE region.

The ERI SEE Work Programme 2009 will include one of the recommendations of the SEE meeting on regional cooperation in quality assurance in higher education (Durrës-Albania, 25 May 2008). Placement of staff members of the quality assurance agencies of the SEE countries which have recently established these structures will be organised to a respective SEE country which has a well functioning agency on quality assurance in higher education.

Activities proposed:

2.4.1. Participation to the International Conference ‘Fostering and Building Human Capital for Sustainable Knowledge Societies in South Eastern Europe’ (Bucharest-Romania, 6-7 March 2009)

ERI SEE will take part to the Conference. The Conference programme has foreseen initial report on ERI SEE to be presented at the Plenary Session II: building human capital-experiences and future challenges on 6 March. The report will be prepared and presented accordingly.

2.4.2. Seminar 5: The role of teacher education and the pre-university sector in building human capital by fostering creativity and innovation – Follow-up to the Bucharest Conference

In the European Year of Creativity and Innovation a regional seminar organised in cooperation with KulturKontakt Austria will take place as a follow-up to the Bucharest Conference. The seminar will address the role of teacher education and the pre-university sector in building human capital by fostering creativity and innovation.

2.4.3. Enabling efficient networking of Bologna Process actors including participation to Workshop 3 on advanced training of e-moderators

The internet forum established in 2008 will continue to function as a regional platform which provides support to regional networking of Bologna Process actors. In order to enable good quality moderation, ERI SEE will support participation of the moderator of this forum to the workshop on advanced training on e-moderation which will involve the moderators of all ERI SEE internet forums and the IT assistant of the ERI SEE Agency (Workshop 3).

2.4.4. Placement 1: Support the networking and peer-learning among SEE bodies of quality assurance in higher education

This capacity building measure will support the networking and peer-learning among the SEE bodies for quality assurance in higher education. Placement of staff members from the recently established agencies from BiH and UNMIK Kosovo in the more advanced SEE agencies of quality assurance in higher education will be organised. The interest of other SEE countries (e.g. Moldova, Montenegro etc.) for involvement in this capacity building measure will be assessed and efforts will be made to maximise the number of SEE countries involved in the peer learning.

2.4.5. Providing relevant information on the ‘knowledge triangle’ on the ERI SEE web site

The library of documents on 'the knowledge triangle' available on the ERI SEE web page will be updated in 2009.

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

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

The ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body will meet twice in 2009. The meetings will be organised by the ERI SEE Agency. The agenda of the second meeting will include discussion on the European developments in the field of qualifications frameworks and briefings from the Governing Board members about the status quo in the respective SEE countries.

2.5.2. Workshop 2: How to operate a national ERI SEE contact point

At the beginning of 2009 the SEE Ministries of Education will nominate the national ERI SEE contact points. In order to support the work of the contact points, the ERI SEE Agency will organise a workshop (Workshop 2) during which the methods of work and the future activities of the national contact points will be discussed and jointly agreed.

2.5.3. Enhanced ERI SEE visibility and networking

- The ERI SEE publication 2009 will be prepared and published.
- The work of ERI SEE will be presented at different meetings and other events relevant for the cooperation in education and training.

2.5.4. Improvement of the ERI SEE web site

The ERI SEE web site will be further improved and enriched with information in education and training relevant for the region and in accordance with the objectives of the Initiative.

2.5.5. Office management and administration

Activities for office management and administration will be taking place continuously.

2.5.6. Planning and reporting activities

Progress reports (activity and financial reports) will be elaborated and presented to the members of the ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body.

Regular auditing procedures in line with the generally accepted accounting principles will take place.

Draft ERI SEE Work Programme and Budget 2010 will be prepared and submitted to the ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body for discussion and approval.

2.5.7. Review and improvement of the existing methodology for evaluation of the impact of ERI SEE activities at national level

The experience from the 2007 survey of the ERI SEE impact at national level which was carried out in the framework of the discussion process 'From Assistance to Cooperation', as well as the regular national ERI SEE reporting introduced in 2008, proved the added value of these activities. Aiming to strengthen this mechanism, the current methodology will be reviewed and elements for its improvement will be proposed to the ERI SEE Governing Board (at the 11th meeting) scheduled for October 2009.