



ERI SEE Moto: *“Development from Within”*

ERI SEE Work Programme 2008

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April 2008

1. Long-term Goal, Mid-Term Objective and Outputs 2008-2010

Long-Term Goal

The **long-term goal** of the Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE) is to contribute to achieving the overall goal “The South Eastern European countries have aligned the development of education standards and systems to the European developments; they have developed broad capacities and know-how in the region, thus contributing to fostering and building human capital in South Eastern Europe, and are linked to the EU and international educational dialogue.”

Measurable indicators:

- a) The instruments of the Bologna process are introduced in all ERI SEE countries.
- b) The Bologna stock taking process, national reports, European University Association and the European Student Union reports over time (2009 to 2015) show improvement of higher education in ERI SEE member countries.
- c) VET standards and instruments in accordance with the Copenhagen Process are accepted and implemented in the ERI SEE region.
- d) The reports of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) show evidence of coherent and coordinated SEE cooperation in education, higher education and research, as well as coordination with the other priority areas of the RCC.

Important assumptions:

- a) International commitments of the ERI SEE members in the education sector are sustained.
- b) European cooperation and support is sustained over a long term period.
- c) European, multilateral institutions and countries outside South Eastern Europe (SEE) support the ERI SEE region in the process of alignment.
- d) The work of the Task Force Building Human Capital (TFBHC) of the RCC is sustained.

Mid-term objective 2008-2010

ERI SEE **mid-term objective 2008-2010** is to become a sustainable, increasingly regionally owned platform for implementation of the education objectives and activities foreseen with the Istanbul Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministers responsible for Education, Science and Research in South Eastern Europe and its' Framework for Action¹.

Measurable indicators:

- e) Regular meetings of the network at strategic level (Governing Board and Consultative Body) have taken place.
- f) At operational level, each ERI SEE member has established a national ERI SEE contact point.
- g) Regular exchange meetings at the operational level are taking place.
- h) The ERI SEE member reports show improved joint activities and cooperation over time.
- i) ¾ of the ERI SEE members provide the required financial support for the ERI SEE Secretariat.
- j) The work of ERI SEE is in line with its role in building human capital in South Eastern Europe as foreseen by the Task Force Building Human Capital of the Regional Cooperation Council.

Important assumptions:

- a) The members of ERI SEE are committed to provide the required resources for the establishment and operation of national ERI SEE contact points.
- b) The ERI SEE position and relations with the Task Force Building Human Capital are defined.

¹ Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministers Responsible for Education, Science and Research in South Eastern Europe, Istanbul-Turkey, May 2007

Outputs to be achieved in 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

Measurable indicators:

- a) Information on LLL initiatives in the region and background information is provided and continuously updated on the ERI SEE website.
- b) An expert network including all ERI SEE members on LLL is established.
- c) A moderated platform to discuss best practices and develop strategic issues has been provided and experts of ¾ of the ERI SEE members are actively participating.
- d) A common core strategy has been presented to the ERI SEE strategic level (Governing Board).

Important assumptions:

- a) The ERI SEE members agree on the need of a common approach to LLL in the region.
- b) The ERI SEE members continue to address LLL as an important measure to support the Lisbon Process.

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

Measurable indicators:

- a) The issue of Qualification Frameworks has been a topic once a year at the Governing Board meetings.
- b) Information on Qualification Frameworks is provided on ERI SEE website.
- c) The dialogue with the Council of Europe and the European Training Foundation is firmly established and sustained.

Important assumptions:

- a) The countries in the region further develop their Qualification Frameworks.

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

Measurable indicators:

- a) ERI SEE has provided moderated platforms on the two topics on its website.
- b) Three seminars/peer learning events (one per year) are organised and assessed.
- c) Topic specific information is provided on the ERI SEE website.

Important assumptions:

- a) The members of ERI SEE are prepared to make country specific information available.
- b) International and foreign organisations are prepared to make topic specific information available.

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

Measurable indicators:

- a) ERI SEE has provided moderated platform on issues of the Bologna process on its website.
- b) Delegates of national accreditation/quality assurance bodies have met at least twice to discuss possible cooperation.

Important assumptions:

- a) National accreditation/quality assurance bodies are prepared to engage in a process of information exchange and cooperation.

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

Measurable indicators:

- a) ERI SEE as an institution has developed into and fostered its form as regional organisation.
- b) The Consultative Body of ERI SEE includes members of the donors of ERI SEE and main international organisations active in the region (Council of Europe, EC, ETF, EUA, OECD, RCC etc).
- c) Regular Governing Board and Consultative Body meetings take place.
- d) At operational level, each ERI SEE member has a national ERI SEE contact point established.
- e) Regular exchange meetings at operational level are taking place.
- f) The ERI SEE website is a free of charge information platform with 200 hits per day.

Important assumptions:

- a) The ERI SEE Governing Board agrees with the further development of ERI SEE as a truly regional organisation.
- b) Donors and international organisations show commitment in active participation in the Consultative Body.

2. ERI SEE activities, with accent to the year 2008

Executive Summary

In the year 2008, the Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE) will continue to be a regional platform for co-operation in the education area and to serve as an interface between ongoing national reforms in South Eastern Europe, 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

- Completion of the training of experts on Project Cycle Management by covering the activity schedule and the cost schedule.
- Meeting of the national VET agencies of SEE.
- Information provision on the ERI SEE website.

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

- Information exchange within the Government Board on the developments at European level, as well as on national developments in the field of qualification frameworks.
- Provision of selected information on Qualification Frameworks on the ERI SEE website.
- Regional project for development of sectoral qualifications in the field of tourism (project for the year 2009).

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

Organisation of topic specific events:

- Seminar on Matura exams.
- Organisation of a study visit to Croatia on ICT supported QA information system.
- Placement of information about the results of the EU funded project "MHADIE" on the ERI SEE website.

Networking with the SEE EDC/HRE network

- Co-organisation of the fourth EDC/HRE networking conference on education for democratic citizenship and intercultural dialogue (Croatia, 2008).

Establishing and moderation of a forum of educationalists in the field of assessment and evaluation **Establishing and moderation of a forum of educationalists in the field of quality assurance.**

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

- Enabling efficient networking of educationalists engaged in the Bologna Process.
- Enabling participation of representatives of all ERI SEE countries to the meeting of the General Assembly of the CEE Network of Quality Assurance Agencies (Albania, May 2008). Meeting to discuss strengthening the regional cooperation of the SEE bodies of quality assurance will take place side by side with the CEEN meeting.
- Participation of ERI SEE representatives to the Conference on Building Human Capital (September 2008).

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.
- Organisational development of ERI SEE, including elaboration of a concept on establishment of representations (national ERI SEE contact points) in the ERI SEE members.
- Institutional Development (Swiss capacity building measure for the ERI SEE Secretariat on planning, budgeting and monitoring ERI SEE activities).
- Enhanced ERI SEE visibility and networking (development of a concept and publishing a regional newsletter, improvement of the ERI SEE website).
- Office management and administration.
- Planning and reporting activities.

2.1. JUSTIFICATION

In the year 2008, the Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE) will continue to be 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 Action², the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child³, as well as the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005 - 2014⁴).

In 2008, 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 the establishment of the Task Force for Building and Fostering 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 Agency⁵ 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 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.

2.2. 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 Understanding⁶ and renew their commitment to regional cooperation encompassing all aspects of education in the context of lifelong learning, research and innovation. With the Memorandum, 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 involved (depending on the status of their integration or rapprochement to the EU) in the implementation of the "Education & Training 2010" work

² The Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All: Meeting our Collective Commitments, World Education Forum, Dakar-Senegal, April 2000

³ 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

⁴ Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, United Nations, Johannesburg-South Africa, August-September 2002

⁵ Agencija za obrazovno reformske inicijative za jugoistočnu Europu, Zagreb, Republic of Croatia

⁶ Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministers Responsible for Education, Science and Research in South Eastern Europe, Istanbul, May 2007

programme, the Copenhagen process and the Bologna process. The ERI SEE countries are involved in the on-going European debate on how to enhance the contribution of lifelong learning for creativity and innovation in society and to strengthen the innovative approaches and culture of better learning⁷.

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; 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 2008⁸, 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 papers⁹ 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 Moldova¹⁰.

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 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 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 will be given to enabling a dialogue among the national VET agencies on lifelong learning and development of national qualifications frameworks.

⁷ The Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission are currently engaged in the preparation of a decision on the European Year of Creativity and Innovation 2009.

⁸ 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", Councils of the European Union, 5723/08, Brussels, January 2008

⁹ Designing Adult Learning Strategies – the Case of South Eastern Europe, European Training Foundation, Turin, 2006

¹⁰ Bologna Process National Report of Moldova, Kishinev, 2004

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" will be available in the academic year 2008/2009.

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 will 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 network of experts (around 25) who were trained in different aspects of Project Cycle Management will complete the training with topics that have not been covered with the ERI SEE workshops in the period 2005 - 2007.

Activities proposed:

Year 2008

2.2.1. Following the results of the workshops, seminars and study visits 2005-2007, completion of the training of educationalists on Project Cycle Management by covering the activity schedule and the cost schedule. Expected number of participants: 25.

The persons involved in this ERI SEE capacity building activity will have the duty to disseminate the knowledge acquired to relevant stakeholders in their respective countries.

2.2.2 Meeting of the national VET agencies of SEE: ERI SEE will cooperate with the ETF, the Regional Cooperation Council and the CARDS Twinning Project for Albania in the organisation of a regional meeting of the national VET agencies. The meeting will take place in Albania (indicative period of the year September 2008). The agenda of the meeting will cover the topic "Lifelong learning and development of qualifications frameworks". ERI SEE will support the participation of representatives from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Moldova, the Republic of Macedonia, UNMIK/PISG Kosovo and Serbia, thus contributing to the regional dimension of the event. Possibilities for future cooperation among the national VET agencies of SEE will be discussed during the meeting, too.

2.2.3 Preparations for establishing a network/forum of experts in LLL. The network will be established in 2009.

Year 2009

Establishment of the network/forum of experts in LLL.

2.3. Output 2: INFORMATION ON THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORK AND ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORKS IN THE SEE REGION HAS BEEN PROVIDED

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 future work of the ERI SEE countries on the development of National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF) will have to take 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 of the countries of the Western Balkans have started intensive discussions and (partly) reforms are being carried out for the establishment of NQFs in VET and Higher Education. Romania is an ERI SEE country which is well advanced in the development of the NQF.

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 the SEE countries (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 the 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.

Activities proposed:

2.3.1. Continuation of the practice of information exchanging on the European developments in the field of qualifications frameworks and briefings on the developments in the ERI

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

SEE region. The members of the ERI SEE Consultative Body from the European University Association, the Council of Europe and the European Training Foundation and the members of the ERI SEE Governing Board will discuss this topic during the second Governing Board and Consultative Body meeting in 2008.

- 2.3.2. Provision of selected information on qualifications frameworks on the ERI SEE web site (best practice examples, documents and reports of meetings organised on this topic at European level etc.).
- 2.3.3. Synergy of the activities with the activities of the Council of Europe and the European Training Foundation in the region will be necessary. Coordination and (possibly) joint work in SEE will gradually become a common practice.

Year 2009

- 2.3.4. Building on the results of the projects supported by KulturKontakt Austria for modernisation of tourism education in Albania, Croatia and Romania, a proposal for a regional project will be prepared with the objective to develop sectoral qualifications in tourism covering IVET, CVET and HE. In this context, the project should also address the elements of credit systems which are important to ensure transferability and accumulation of prior learning.

2.4. 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 in the framework of the Bologna Process. Improved quality in 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 about the developments in the field of quality assurance in the framework of 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 their 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.

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

Regular implementation of national assessments and continuous participation of the SEE countries in the international assessments of education are very important for monitoring and comparability of the achievements of the countries in the development of quality education. The recommendations from the regional seminar on national and international assessments (Bar-Podgorica, September 2007) recommended the following areas for future cooperation:

- In the second half of 2008 (preferably in November), ERI SEE to organise a follow-up seminar on the experience from the Matura exams in SEE.
- To explore the possibility for linking with the IEA event that will take place in Sofia in 2008.
- The World Bank and the ERI SEE to continue the cooperation by supporting different aspects of regional cooperation in the field of assessments in education.

The participants to the regional round table on accreditation in higher education in South Eastern Europe appreciated the proposal of the Director of the Accreditation Agency for Higher Education of Albania to increase the relevance of the meeting of the General Assembly of the CEE Network of Quality Assurance Agencies that will take place in Durrës, Albania on 24-25 May 2008, by inviting to the meeting representatives of the SEE countries and UNMIK/PISG Kosovo which have not established quality assurance bodies yet. It is to be expected that this opportunity will contribute to shortening the period needed for establishing the national bodies and starting the procedure for CEEN membership. All SEE representatives would have opportunities for networking with colleagues and exchange of experience and good practice examples.

The advancement of the Republic of Croatia in the development and use of the information system for quality assurance in higher education was highly valued and was identified as potential for future regional cooperation and (possibly) work on the development of a tool that would be used by other SEE countries, too.

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 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.

The participants to the regional seminar on equity in education (Prishtina-UNMIK/PISG Kosovo, October 2007) recommended:

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

- Equity in education to continue being a thematic area of ERI SEE. A follow-up event to be organised which would focus on the design of national policies, practices and resourcing which would reduce failure and dropout from the education systems;
- Establishing a platform for exchange of the experience of the SEE countries, dissemination of the results of numerous projects in the field of equity in education. The network would also include the ERI SEE donor countries and provide the opportunities for dissemination of results of their experiences and good practice examples;
- In cooperation with the Zurich University of Teacher Training, to explore the possibility for dissemination of the results of the EU funded project “MHADIE”;
- In 2008, ERI SEE to support a visit of ERI SEE educational experts to Sibiu-Romania in order to be acquainted with the achievements in framework of the Phare funded project “A Friendly School, Open For Everybody - Inclusive Education for Disadvantaged Groups”.

Activities proposed:

- 2.4.1. Organisation of a study visit to Croatia for representatives of the ERI SEE countries interested to be acquainted into more details with the ICT supported information system for quality assurance in higher education.
- 2.4.2. In cooperation with the Zurich University of Teacher Training (Switzerland), dissemination of the results of the EU funded project “MHADIE” via the ERI SEE web site will be organised and implemented.
- 2.4.3. Upon recommendation of Croatia and acceptance of the Council of Europe, the Fourth EDC/HRE networking meeting on education for democratic citizenship will take place in Croatia in June 2008. The ERI SEE will be co-organiser of the event. Around 25 educationalists and members of the network are expected to participate to the meeting.
- 2.4.4. Establishment and moderation of a discussion platform for experts in the field of assessment and evaluation in education. 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.
- 2.4.5. Establishment and moderation of a discussion platform for experts in the field of quality assurance in education and training. 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.
- 2.4.6. Following the successful establishment of a network of experts in assessment and evaluation (ERI SEE Seminars in 2006 in 2007) and the expressed interest for continuation of the process of learning and sharing experience, a seminar on Matura exams will take place in December 2008.

Year 2009

- 2.4.7. Organisation of a regional seminar on teacher training for inclusive education/ teacher training for diversity.

2.5. 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 fundamental premises 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 will promote coherency and coordination between education, higher education and research by creating a platform for dialogue and cooperation of actors involved in these sectors.

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

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.

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

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".

The role of ERI SEE in human capital development and the ways of cooperation with the TFBHC will be defined in 2008. The participation of ERI SEE representatives to the meetings and conferences organised by the TFBHC will be jointly agreed.

Based on the recommendations from the round table on accreditation in higher education in SEE (Zagreb, June 2007) and the regional seminar on the Bologna Process after London and the challenges for SEE, different activities are to take place in 2008.

Activities proposed:

- 2.5.1. Enabling efficient networking of different partners engaged in the Bologna Process and enabling exchange of experience, good practice examples and peer learning via the ERI SEE web site. The interest for establishment of a moderated forum will be assessed, too.
- 2.5.2. Enabling ERI SEE representatives to participate to the meeting of the General Assembly meeting of CEE Network of Quality Assurance Agencies the workshop. Ten representatives from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia and UNMIK/PISG Kosovo will participate to the events which will take place in Albania on 23-24 May 2008. Meeting to discuss strengthening the regional cooperation of the SEE bodies of quality assurance will take place side by side with the CEEN meeting.

Year 2009

- 2.5.3. Participation of ERI SEE representatives to the Conference on Building Human Capital which will be organised by the Task Force Fostering and Building Human Capital.

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

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

The ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body will meet twice in 2008. 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.

2.6.2. Organisational development of ERI SEE, including elaboration of a concept on establishment of national ERI SEE contact points

Taking into account the necessity to increase the regional ownership of the Initiative, as well as the attempts to increase the ERI SEE role as a platform for mutual sharing of experiences, good practice examples and expertise in education and training in SEE, a concept for establishing national ERI SEE contact points at the respective ministries or other institutions/organisations will be elaborated. The proposal will be presented to the members of the ERI SEE Governing Board and will be subject to the second Governing Board for discussion and approval.

2.6.3. Institutional Development of the ERI SEE Secretariat

In 2008 Switzerland will support a management coaching capacity building measure, aiming at improvement of the capacities of the ERI SEE Secretariat for planning, budgeting and monitoring ERI SEE activities²¹.

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

- Concept of a regional ERI SEE newsletter will be developed, contributions from the ERI SEE members and partners will be collected, edited and the newsletter will be published.
- An ERI SEE leaflet will be prepared and published.
- The ERI SEE website will be improved and enriched with information in education and training relevant for the region and in accordance with the objectives of the Initiative.

2.6.5. Office management and administration

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

2.6.6. Planning and reporting activities.

In 2008, the ERI SEE planning will be supported by an international consultant. 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.

²¹ Switzerland and education reforms in South Eastern Europe, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC, Zurich, May 2008.