

# ERI SEE Work Programme 2014

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## Background to the Work Programme 2014

The Ministers responsible for Education and Higher Education in the [Memorandum of Understanding on the Role and Organization of ERI SEE \(MoU\)](#) signed in June 2010 reiterated the importance of education as a key priority for the South Eastern Europe region for finding innovative ways to back the economic growth, sustainable development, competitiveness and for safeguarding equitable and inclusive societies. Through the ERI SEE mission statement the ERI SEE member countries recognised that education and training are crucial in promoting knowledge based, competitive and socially cohesive societies in Europe, and play important role in responding to the chances and challenges of globalisation. They are therefore a key to sustainable development and prosperity, in particular in South Eastern Europe.

Through its activities the Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE) supported sustainable education reforms through regional cooperation, while taking into account both country-specific needs and demands in education reforms, as well as European trends and developments.

In 2013 the role of ERI SEE as a regional organisation facilitating communication and cooperation in education in the South East Europe was recognised in the development and preparation of [the South East Europe 2020 Strategy](#) (SEE 2020 Strategy) coordinated and developed by the Regional Cooperation Council. The SEE 2020 Strategy seeks to attain the levels of socioeconomic growth necessary to improve the prosperity of all its citizens and to facilitate eventual integration with the European Union (EU). The SEE 2020 Strategy recognises the importance education plays in attainment of these aims. It very much resonates with the commitments of the Ministers of Education and Higher Education expressed in the 2010 MoU as it recognizes the potential of the region to build new competitive edge driven by knowledge and innovation and based on its human capital and, therefore, calls for cooperation in promoting innovation and fostering knowledge – driven growth in the region.

To reach this formidable aims, the SEE 2020 Strategy identifies several pillars where strengthened regional cooperation would facilitate socio-economic growth, prosperity and job creation in the region. One of these pillars is the Smart Growth Pillar whose targets are to be achieved through specific objectives and measures identified in four dimensions: Education and Competences; R&D and Innovation; Digital Society; and Culture and Creative Sectors. ERI SEE member countries and observers were consulted and have adopted the specific objectives to be achieved and measures identified as instruments to achieve the objectives in the dimension of Education and Competences through a consultation process in May and June 2013. Furthermore, at the 17th ERI SEE Governing Board meeting held in Sarajevo, on 20-21 March, ERI SEE has been appointed as the coordinator of the dimension Education and Competences of the pillar Smart Growth.

Therefore, this ERI SEE Work Programme seeks to contribute to the coordination and facilitation of cooperation with an aim of contributing to the implementation of the SEE 2020 Strategy, while building on the experience and activities of ERI SEE over the past years.

## Introduction

The SEE 2020 Strategy sets the following two targets for the Smart Growth Pillar: (1) increase GDP per person employed by 32%; and (2) add 300,000 highly qualified people to the workforce.

To achieve these pillar targets the following specific objectives have been identified under the Education and Competences dimension by ERI SEE member countries and observers: (1) decrease of early leavers from education and training as % of population aged 18-24; and (2) increase tertiary educational attainment as % of population aged 30-34.

To achieve the specific objectives under the Education and Competences dimension the following measures have been identified as relevant by ERI SEE member countries and observers:

1. Introduce policies to increase equitable access to, and participation in, high quality education at all levels;
2. Implement measures to prevent early-school leaving and 'drop-out' and improve completion rates at all levels;
3. Standardise qualifications and remove obstacles to their recognition;
4. Ensure education better meet economic and labour market needs; and
5. Entrepreneurship key competence development at all levels of education and training.

The identified specific objectives for the Education and Competences dimension have in one or another form been on the national education policy agenda across the region for a number of years now. Similarly, the member countries have been working on introducing the measures identified as relevant for the objectives set in the Education and Competences dimension for a long time. Therefore, it is not surprising that the ERI SEE activities has already facilitated and supported the regional cooperation in the areas identified above.

The ERI SEE activities were clustered around several key areas over the past three years: support to the reforms of the vocational education and training in the region through the support to the South East Europe Regional VET Network (SEEVET-Net) and the cluster Modernising VET system – improving performance, quality and attractiveness of VET; building the National Qualification Frameworks through the cluster on Development of National Qualifications Frameworks; strengthening of teachers' profession in SEE countries as well as bridging gaps between teacher education policies and practice through Teacher Training cluster; supporting processes of development of the education policies based on evidences through Evidence-Based Policy Making in Education cluster. Also, building of quality of education systems was supported through events organised by the ERI SEE Secretariat on the following themes: monitoring, quality assurance and standards in education, equity in education, early school leaving and drop-out in education.

To facilitate the regional cooperation aimed at contributing to the implementation of SEE 2020 Strategy the proposed ERI SEE activities in 2014 will be streamlined through several thematic areas: (1) Quality Education For All – ensuring equitable access, full participation and high completion ; (2) Removing Obstacles to Recognition of Qualifications; (3) Strengthening the Vocational Education and Training Systems and (4) Ensuring Quality Education through Teacher Education which is in the line with the continuing ERI SEE activities.

These four thematic areas will be supported administratively through (1) Coordination and Monitoring of the SEE 2020 Strategy in the dimension of Education and Competences and (2) Coordination and implementation of the ERI SEE Work Programme.

## **ERI SEE Work Programme 2014**

### **1. Regional Workshops**

#### **Quality Education For All – ensuring equitable access, high completion and prevention of drop out in education**

The two Smart Growth pillar targets: (1) decrease of early leavers from education and training as % of population aged 18-24; and (2) increase tertiary educational attainment as % of population aged 30-34 are directly correlated with policies aimed at broadening access, ensuring participation and completion and preventing drop-out of students across education levels. Therefore, two specific measures have been identified as relevant for achieving these targets:

1. Introduce policies to increase equitable access to, and participation in, high quality education at all levels;
2. Implement measures to prevent early-school leaving and 'drop-out' and improve completion rates at all levels;

ERI SEE has continuously addressed the issues of equitable access, participation and completion in quality education for the past three years. The ERI SEE Secretariat initiated and organised the first regional conference [“Policy development and monitoring for quality and equity in education”](#) in December 2011 which addressed issues of equity and quality of across the overall education systems and not separately for each level of education. The initiated cooperation in this field was continued by organising a series of regional conferences. The following year in December 2012 a conference [“Introduction and implementation of standards-based education in SEE – models and challenges”](#) focused on improvement of quality of education by development and implementation of standards-based education in the region and in December 2013 the regional conference titled [“Stay@School -The Challenges We Face - Early School Leaving and Drop Out in SEE”](#) focused on the challenges in early school leaving and drop out in SEE .

Therefore, building upon the previous activities of ERI SEE and in the light of the SEE 2020 Strategy targets a Regional Workshop will be organised on the theme: “Quality Education For All – ensuring equitable access, high completion and prevention of drop out in education” in July 2014, in Serbia. The Regional Workshop will gather the representatives of the regional Ministries of Education and other relevant national institutions and bodies, the representatives of international organisations, the representatives of the non-governmental sector and the academic community, as well as relevant experts.

The Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) will engage an expert who will assist the ERI SEE Secretariat in the development of a regional programme of action in the area of access, completion and prevention of drop out in education. The expert will be engaged to collect relevant data and information which will serve as basis for a regional baseline report which will provide brief country outlines concerning access, completion and prevention of drop out, as well as the current strategies, policies and measures aimed at widening access, supporting completion and preventing drop out developed in the countries of the

region. The baseline report will be used as foundation for development of a draft regional programme of action on ensuring quality education for all. The regional programme of action will contain the analytical background and justification for the regional programme of action, detailed actions for regional cooperation, envisaged outcomes and outputs of the actions and a corresponding budget proposal. The draft regional programme of action will be presented at the Regional Workshop. The Regional Workshop will provide an opportunity to discuss the baseline report as well as the draft regional programme of action on ensuring quality education for all.

Based on the discussions at the Regional Workshop the expert will prepare a final version of the regional programme of action on ensuring quality education for all. The final version of the regional programme will be sent to the ERI SEE Governing Board for formal approval.<sup>1</sup>

## Ensuring Quality Education through Teacher Training

The SEE 2020 Strategy recognises the importance of ensuring provision of quality education in the region. One of the conditions for ensuring quality education is enhancing the quality of teacher training. Strengthening the quality of teachers has been a continuous focus of education policies in the region. A number of initiatives aimed at the development of standards for teacher competences, systems of career advancement and systems for teacher support and assessment have been launched and implemented. One important initiative in this field is the work of the Western Balkans Platform for Cooperation. Having in mind that the use of contemporary forms of teaching and learning by teachers has been gaining momentum in the region and that the creation of a new teaching and learning culture is under construction ERI SEE has supported the development of a Cluster of Knowledge on Teacher Training in 2013 led by Montenegro.

During the [first Meeting of the Cluster of Knowledge](#) held in Podgorica, Montenegro in February 2013 a number of relevant themes for regional cooperation have been identified. One of the broad themes proposed for further regional cooperation was “Identification of gaps between theory, pre-service education and teachers’ practice”. As the Evidence Based Policy Making Cluster of Knowledge led by Serbia has been focusing on developing policies informed by theory and research and based on evidence, a synergy between these two clusters on this theme would be beneficial. Therefore, building upon the previous activities of the Cluster of Knowledge on Teacher Training and on Evidence Based Policy Making, Regional Workshop on “Theory and Education of Teachers and Teacher’s Practice” will be organised in November 2014. The Regional Seminar will bring together representatives of the Ministries of Education, relevant national institutions and bodies, experts, research community, representatives of teacher education institutions and faculties and teacher practitioners.

The Regional Workshop will be organised in collaboration between the two clusters and will look to create synergies with the existing initiatives in this domain, in particular the work of the Western Balkans Platform for Cooperation. The Cluster of Knowledge on Teacher Training with the expert support of the Centre for Education Policy acting as the ERI SEE interim secretariat will bring in the expertise on the theories, education of teachers and teacher’s practice, while the Cluster of Knowledge

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<sup>1</sup> The expert may conduct an online consultation with the ERI SEE Governing Board regarding the regional programme of action prior and/or after the Regional Workshop.

on Evidence Based Policy Making will bring in knowledge on how to link policies on teacher education with research and theory on teacher education and teacher practices.

The Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) will engage an expert who will assist the ERI SEE Secretariat in the development of a regional programme of action in the area teacher education. The expert will be engaged to collect relevant data and information which will serve as basis for a regional baseline report which will provide brief country outlines concerning teacher education. The expert will take into account the existing reports on teacher education in the region. The report will include an overview of the current strategies, policies and measures developed in the area of teacher pre-service and in-service education, the professionalization of teachers and it will include a mapping of teacher pre-service and in-service training needs. The baseline report will be used as foundation for development of a draft regional programme of action on teacher education. The regional programme of action will contain the analytical background and justification for the regional programme of action, detailed actions for regional cooperation, envisaged outcomes and outputs of the actions and a corresponding budget proposal. The draft regional programme of action will be presented at the Regional Workshop. The Regional Workshop will provide an opportunity to discuss the baseline report as well as the draft regional programme of action on teacher education.

Based on the discussions at the Regional Workshop the expert will prepare a final version of the regional programme of action in the area of teacher education. The final version of the regional programme will be sent to the ERI SEE Governing Board for formal approval.

## **2. Knowledge exchange activities**

### **Removing obstacles to Recognition of Qualifications**

The SEE 2020 Strategy promotes regional cooperation across different areas. One of the key cross-cutting issues of the strategy is the development of free movement of people within the SEE region. Therefore, a theme of removing obstacles to recognition of qualification within the SEE region directly facilitates free movement of people within the SEE region. Development of standardised frameworks of qualifications is one of the tools to achieve this aim and it builds directly on the work of the ERI SEE cluster on National Qualifications Frameworks led by Croatia for the past four years. On one hand, it is important to note that the work on development of the National Qualifications Frameworks is one part of tackling the obstacles to recognition of qualifications. On the other hand, the work on the development of National Qualifications Frameworks and removing obstacles to recognition in SEE region also contributes to the strengthening of connections between the education and labour market by creating transparency of awarded degrees and learning outcomes, as well as enhancing equity in education systems by providing clear and flexible learning paths across education levels and types of education. Furthermore, within the framework of the Bologna process a Regional SEE Working Group on Recognition of Qualifications in the region has been established which aims to enhance the recognition procedures in higher education within the region.

Therefore, building upon the previous activities of the Cluster of Knowledge on National Qualification Frameworks, the work of the Regional SEE Working Group on Recognition of Qualifications in the region and in the light of the SEE 2020 Strategy targets a Regional event will be organised on the theme

of “Removing obstacles to recognition of qualifications” in June 2014 by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport of the Republic of Croatia in cooperation with the ERI SEE Secretariat and with the support of the Regional Cooperation Council. The Regional Workshop will gather the representatives of the regional Ministries of Education and other relevant national institutions and bodies, the representatives of international organisations, the representative of the non-governmental sector and the academic community, as well as relevant experts. Previous and during this regional event, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport of the Republic of Croatia will coordinate activities in the area of “Removing Obstacles to Recognition of Qualifications” with the representatives of the ERI SEE member countries.

## **Strengthening Vocational Education and Training Systems**

ERI SEE has identified VET development as an important factor for economic and social development. ERI SEE has identified the development of mutual policy learning practices through enhanced institutional cooperation in Vocational Education and Training in South East Europe as one of its core objectives and ERI SEE has supported the development of the SEEVET-Net in the past 5 years.

In 2011, the institutional network of VET centres – SEEVET-Net was established through signing of Cooperation Agreement between VET Centres in South East Europe. The SEEVET-Net was formed in order to foster a greater relationship between SEE VET institutions and to promote regional co-operation of the National VET institutions acting in the SEECP region. The overall SEEVET – Net objective is to support implementation of policies in the VET sector contributing to human capital development in a lifelong learning perspective, through policy learning in the context of the objectives related to the EU accession and the “Education and Training 2020” and follow-ups.

In addition, ERI SEE supported the work of the Cluster of Knowledge on Vocational Education and Training led by Romania. The work of the CoK on VET and the SEEVET – Net are complementary and in order to ensure synergies between the two initiatives ERI SEE has already organised joint meetings between the two initiatives.

To further build upon the established synergies, in September 2014, a joint seminar of the CoK on VET and the SEEVET – Net, followed by a SEEVET-Net annual meeting will be organised by the ERI SEE Secretariat with the support of the Romanian National Centre for TVET Development and KulturKontakt. The thematic focus of the joint seminar will be the enhancement of the work based learning of students in VET – a theme that has been identified as a priority by both initiatives.

### **3. Annual Conference**

#### **Regional Cooperation in Education – Past, Present and the Future**

Having in mind that ERI SEE has passed its 10 year mark from the first [Memorandum of Understanding signed in Nicosia in 2003](#) and that the SEE 2020 Strategy developed under the RCC leadership has brought new impetus to the regional cooperation across several areas a regional conference on the past, present and the future of the regional cooperation in education will be organised in December 2014 in

Belgrade, Serbia. The regional conference will bring together national delegations appointed by the responsible Ministries, regional experts, representatives of international organisations and donors to discuss the regional cooperation in education with an aim of exploring cooperation in education in the region.

## **Institutional support to ERI SEE**

### **Coordination and Monitoring of the SEE 2020 Strategy – Dimension D Education and competences**

To achieve the goals of the SEE 2020 Strategy the OECD is tasked with the development of policy quantitative and qualitative indicators and impact indicators to assess policies used to implement the SEE 2020 Strategy and track progress on achieving the goals and targets set out in the SEE 2020 Strategy.

The European Training Foundation, as an EU agency, supports the countries in the monitoring and evaluation of progress achieved in the area of human capital development through regular reporting exercises with standard sets of indicators: the Torino process, Bruges review and Small Business Act assessment. Furthermore, the ETF is under the FRAME Skills for Future Initiative tasked by DG ELARG with the development of a set of common regional and specific national indicators to measure the progress towards the achievements of the Skills Vision 2020 and the related roadmap. The sets of indicators and evidence can feed into tracking the SEE countries' progress in implementing the key strategic actions under Dimension D 'Education and competences' (specifically D1, D2, D3, D4, D5, D7).

The work will be done in three stages 1) development of indicators, 2) collection of data and (3) analysis of data to input into the reports on the implementation of the SEE 2020 Strategy. ERI SEE is responsible for coordinating the dissemination, consultation process and validation of the indicators developed by the OECD with the relevant national Ministries, as well as the collection of data and its analysis under the dimension Education and Competences. The development of indicators will be correlated with the indicators developed under the FRAME Skills for Future Initiative by the countries and the ETF.

ERI SEE will need to communicate with the contact points within each of the Ministries to provide feedback during the development of indicators, providing data for assessment, providing responses to content inquiries, providing feedback on the analysis, take part in the national consultations if needed. ERI SEE will make use of the network of national technical teams created through FRAME Skills for Future Initiative.

Specifically the tasks of monitoring the SEE 2020 Strategy include: (1) Validating the assessment grids for the monitoring process; (2) Distributing the grids to the contact points in the national governments and explaining the modalities to each question; (3) Collecting the answers to the grid questions from the countries, (4) Sending filled-out grids to the OECD for assessment, (5) Collecting quantitative data for the Impact/Outcome indicators from National Statistical Offices, Central Banks and Chambers of Commerce of the countries and collaborate with ETF for its available evidence, (6) Analysing data and trends for Annual report (with OECD guidance and ETF support), (7) Communicating OECD requests/inquiries to the contact points in the national administrations and vice versa and (8)

Organizing the meetings with country representatives (including private sector consultation as needed).

The estimated workload to contribute and coordinate the monitoring process of the SEE 2020 Strategy is between 60 and 80 working days per year. Support will be provided to the ERI SEE Secretariat in the process of coordinating and collecting the information for the process of monitoring the SEE 2020 Strategy.

### **Coordination and implementation of the ERI SEE Work Programme**

In the light of the establishment of the ERI SEE Secretariat the Centre for Education Policy acting as the interim secretariat the Secretariat will continue to provide institutional support to the ERI SEE.

The institutional support to ERI SEE activities will be provided through organisation of two regular meeting of the ERI SEE Governing Board in April and November 2014. With respect to the institutional transformation process under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia and the Governing Board members, CEP will hand over the relevant ERI SEE documentation to the newly established ERI SEE Secretariat in the Republic of Serbia.

Until the process of transformation has been successfully completed the Secretariat of ERI SEE will continue to provide organisational, operational and financial management support to the ERI SEE.

Additionally it will continue to facilitate communication by disseminating relevant information to the Governing Board members and through regular updates of the ERI SEE website resurrected in 2011. Regular updates on ERI SEE activities through the network of national contact points and with the members of the Governing Board will be continued. Apart from networking activities related to the coordination and monitoring of the education dimension of the SEE 2020 Strategy, the work of ERI SEE will be presented at different meetings and other events of the ERI SEE institutional partners (ETF, "People and skills" priority in the Danube Strategy etc.).

## ENVISAGED TIMELINE FOR THE ERI SEE ACTIVITIES IN 2014

ACTIVITY	MONTH AND PLACE
18th meeting of the ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body	April, Montenegro
Regional Workshop “Quality Education For All – ensuring equitable access, high completion and prevention of drop out in education”	July, Serbia
Regional event “Removing obstacles to recognition of qualifications”	June, Croatia
Regional Workshop on “Theory and Education of Teachers and Teacher’s Practice”	November, TBD
Joint seminar on enhancement of the work based learning of students in VET of the CoK on VET and the SEEVET – Net, followed by a SEEVET-Net annual meeting	September, TBD
19th meeting of the ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body	November, TBD
Annual Conference: Regional Cooperation in Education – Past, Present and the Future	December, Serbia