



# EDUCATION REFORM INITIATIVE OF SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE (ERI SEE) ACTIVITY REPORT 2019

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ERI SEE WORK PROGRAMME 2019 - 2020

# ACTIVITY REPORT

## ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ERI SEE WORK PROGRAMME 2019 - 2020

1<sup>st</sup> January – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019

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## Executive Summary

2019 was the year of expansion for the Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE) in terms of the number of activities, human resources, budget and visibility.

The first international regional project was awarded to the ERI SEE, in the area of modernization of vocational education and training and cooperation between education and business sector. The project is called *Towards regionally-based occupational standards – TO REGOS* and is funded by the Austrian Development Agency with the funds secured by the Austrian Development Cooperation.

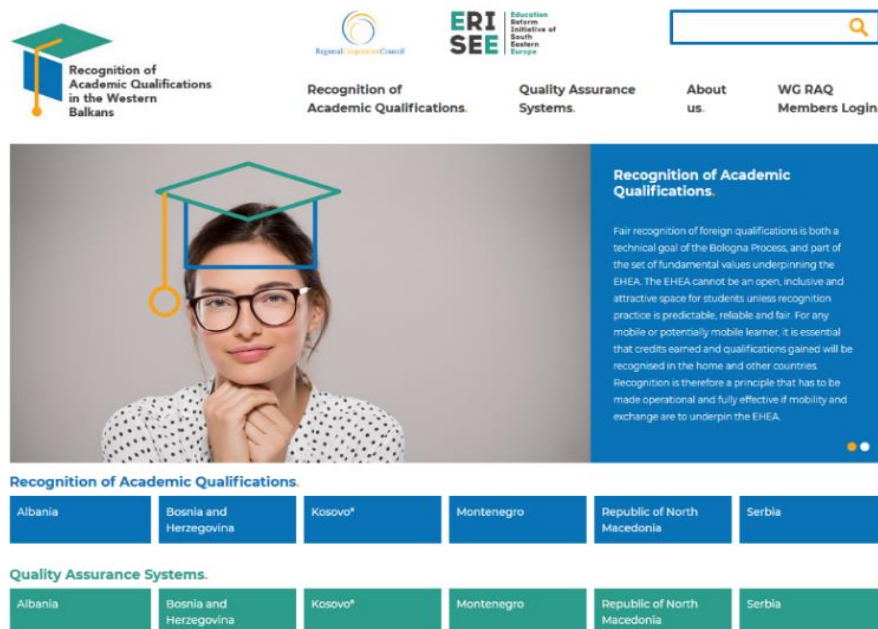
The project is the result of the long-standing cooperation between the ERI SEE and Vocational Education and Training (VET) centres/agencies from the region, in charge of VET policies implementation. The project is also joined by the chambers of commerce from the region, as representatives of businesses. Altogether, the partners form the Western Balkans Alliance for Work-based Learning, which was established within the framework of and supported by the

Berlin Process. The project plans to contribute to the employability and labour-market mobility of young people in the SEE region by forming a strong partnership between business and education and ensuring definition and elaboration of labour-market relevant skills in the standards of occupations. 5 standards of occupations are going to be developed at regional level, in 2 sectors – tourism and hospitality and construction industry, following the consensus among the partners.

The project also plans to enable transposition of regionally-based standards of occupations into national standards of qualifications, and their adoption following nationally defined procedures.

The project is supported by the KulturKontakt Austria and Austrian Chamber of Commerce, and its planned duration is 26 months.





In addition to the intensification of activities in the area of VET, the thematic priority of recognition of academic qualifications also witnessed a more significant engagements, particularly in terms of developing a regional on-line platform – joint information system facilitating recognition of academic qualifications. The joint information system, currently still in its testing form, is built with the purpose of being a central regional

point containing verified information about recognition procedures, contacts, bodies, quality assurance standards and procedures, as well as information about accredited higher education institutions and programmes in the region.

Reflecting the more intense pace in the activities, the number of employees consequently grew, supported by the TO REGOS project; therefore ERI SEE Secretariat gained 2 more staff members – an overall project coordinator (0.5 FTE) and a financial manager (0.3 FTE) while keeping existing structure of Director and Assistant to the Director.

2019 was an important year from the point of view of finances as well. Due to the approved project, the budget of the ERI SEE Secretariat significantly grew. In addition, an additional contribution received from North Macedonia, with the purpose of contributing to the enhancement of Quality Assurance in higher education and regional cooperation in other areas: modernization of VET and Teacher Education and Training. The additional contribution will be used for the organization of an international conference on QA in higher education, regional conference in VET, a number of educational studies and analysis to be used for further planning of activities, such as regional projects. The additional contribution from an ERI SEE Member country is a good practice example, the multiplication of which should be further explored.

The relationships with the ministries of education, in charge of the ERI SEE Secretariat, are strong and Secretariat was receiving continuous support from them, via the Governing Board members as well as via individual contacts with ministries' officials. Good practices of having the GB members involved in strategic issues, such as in human resources selection when building up ERI SEE team or reaching potential new donors, should be intensified and further used.



## ERI SEE ACTIVITIES AND NEWS 2019

Update on "Towards regionally-based occupational standards" – TO REGOS project

15th March 2019 officially marked the beginning of the ERI SEE and Western Balkans Alliance for Work-based Learning (WBA for WBL) project Towards regionally-based standards of occupation, funded

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18th-19th November 2019,  
Vienna

Visibility of ERI SEE also increased, due to the continuous cooperation with international and national partners, and business and education experts. This was also supported by the dissemination activities which included the wide distribution of the ERI SEE first Newsletter in October 2019.

2019 was an important year in which the existing ties and partnerships were strengthened, any many more potentials and future growth opportunities were identified.

## Strategic activities

In line with the ERI SEE mission - to facilitate cooperation at regional level, considering relevant European developments and trends in education, and at the same time keeping close links to national context and priorities, thus contributing to sustainable economic developments and sustainable education reforms - ERI SEE established firm connections with the most relevant partners in the region: ministries of education as policy makers, national agencies as policy implementors, professionals as the source of additional expertise, and international organisations active in the region as partners in activities.

The strategic positioning of ERI SEE was established through several channels:

- 1. At management level, through cooperation with the Governing Board, composed of representatives of ministries of education from 7 members countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia) and additional ministries' decision-makers and officials.**

Governing Board, by providing input and adopting the Work Programmes, Activity and Financial reports, as well as providing assistance in challenging situations (such as payments of annual contributions on time, relevant and adequate contacts for particular ERI SEE activities, thematic inputs for strategic reforms in respective countries, support in identifying and connecting with potential donors, lobbying for ERI SEE with potential donors and providing networking possibilities) continuously supported the ERI SEE Secretariat in 2019 and takes credit for its growth, increased visibility and strategic positioning. The Governing Board members were regularly informed about progress in the implementation of the Work Programme and activities that took place in the course of the year 2019 with the possibility of intervening or adding whatever they find relevant.

Connections with ministries' decision-makers and officials with long-standing expertise in relevant matters (other than the Governing Board members) across the region, additionally helped to strengthen the position of the ERI SEE in terms of building its own expertise, gaining relevant information and support within the region, and visibility.





2. Via cooperation and partnering with international organizations, such as European Training Foundation (ETF) and Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), and to a lesser degree, European Commission and Western Balkan Platform on Education and Training (WB PET), Western Balkan Fund, European Delegations etc.



ERI SEE partnered with the European Training Foundation (ETF) in the activities regarding continuous professional development (CPD) of teachers, or teacher education and training, by organizing seminars or similar peer learning activities for representatives of teacher training agencies from the region. With RCC ERI SEE cooperated on issues of recognition of academic qualifications in the Western Balkans. ERI SEE also presented its work in the area of Joint Information System facilitating recognition of academic qualifications, containing information on QA standards and principles, recognition procedures, and accreditation status of HEI and study programmes in the region, during the European Commission Ministerial Meeting organized in Belgrade in June 2019.

Exchange of information on regional projects and activities was organized by ERI SEE by

inviting RCC representatives to its events dealing with similar topics.



Cooperation with other international organizations active in the region (GIZ, KKA, Swiss Development Agency etc.) was also encouraged by the ERI SEE Secretariat, by inviting representatives of the mentioned institutions to ERI SEE events related to modernization of VET. The organizations got the opportunity to present what their current activities in the region are and were invited to share their project outcomes and results on the regional platform Western Balkans Alliance for Work-based Learning (WBA4WBL). Some of the international organizations delivered their project results onto the platform, with the potential of WBA4WBL becoming a regional repository of relevant outputs and project results on a wider scale.

### 3. International donors

In 2019 ERI SEE initiated contacts with international donors such as Swedish and Norwegian Development Cooperation Agencies, Embassies etc., however more intense communication was postponed for 2020 due to heavy workload of these bodies.

### 4. At operational level, via the coordination of 4 professional working groups, networks or group of experts, each covering a particular thematic priority area:

- ◆ Western Balkans Alliance for Work-based Learning, covering the area of VET modernization
- ◆ RCC and ERI SEE Joint Working Group for Recognition of Academic Qualifications
- ◆ SEE Teacher Education and Training Network
- ◆ Regional Group of Experts in Quality Assurance in General Education.

These 4 groups are coordinated by ERI SEE or by ERI SEE and partner organizations (RCC and ETF), and work on the achievements of the goals defined by the strategic context: EC Strategy for the Western Balkans, Country Reports and Recommendations, Berlin Process and Multiannual Action Plan for Regional Economic Area.

More specifically, the 4 professional groups work on the following issues respectively:

- ◆ Development of regionally-based occupational standards in priority sectors defined jointly by 6 economies (tourism and catering, and construction industry), as a way of reducing the skills mismatch and gap between the labour-market needs and educational provision that exists in the region, and enhancing regional labour mobility
- ◆ Enhancement of recognition of academic qualifications, as a way to increase and facilitate regional mobility of highly educated labour force, and also quality of HE systems
- ◆ Enhancement in QA procedures regarding general education, with particular focus on external evaluation, as a way of increasing the quality of general educational provision
- ◆ Enhancement in the system of teacher education and training in the region, with particular focus on needs analysis and use of data in policy making.





## Organizational priority activities

Financial issues and regular annual contributions, being the basis for stable functioning and fulfilment of the agreed activities of the ERI SEE Secretariat, were an important organizational priority over which continuous communication was maintained with the member states – ministries of education. Even though the ERI SEE Secretariat experienced some difficulties in the first half of the year regarding the timely payment of the annual contributions, all the issues were successfully solved and the last quarter of the year witnessed not only the payments of regular obligations as defined by the Memorandum of Understanding, Brdo 2010, but also the significant increase in the ERI SEE Secretariat annual budget.

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Namely, an additional contribution (originally not planned in the Financial Plan for 2019) in the amount of 65.000,00 EUR was received by the North Macedonian Ministry of education, with the purpose of funding regional activities regarding quality assurance in higher and general education as well as VET modernization. The North Macedonian additional contribution was based on a signed Agreement of Cooperation between the Ministry of Education and ERI SEE Secretariat specifying rights and responsibilities, activities and amounts on which the contribution must be spent. It includes the organization of an international conference on QA in higher education, regional activities for modernization of VET, and expert studies on QA in general education, HE and teacher education and training (continuous professional development), in 2019 and continuing in 2020.

Another significant increase in funding was due to the approved project proposal Towards regionally-based occupational standards – TO REGOS by the Austrian Development Agency, funded by the Austrian Development Cooperation. The thematic scope of the projects is described under the Thematic priority Areas.

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Additionally, to financial issues, 2019 saw the prioritization of internal strengthening of the ERI SEE Secretariat in terms of:

- ◆ Hiring new staff (Assistant to the Director – 1 FTE, Overall Project Coordinator for the project Towards regionally-based occupational standards - TO REGOS - 0.5 FTE, and Financial Manager for the said project – 0.3. FTE). The new staff were hired after the announcement of the vacancies and gathering of the selection panel, composed of the Governing Board members and ERI SEE Secretariat representative. The practice of involving the GB members into the selection procedures proved to be very valuable and efficient. The new staff – Overall Project Coordination and Financial Manager were hired as the result of the approval of the above mentioned TO REGOS project.
- ◆ Induction of the staff into the work of the ERI SEE Secretariat,
- ◆ Probation work and evaluation of staff according to the internal procedures
- ◆ Revising of the Internal Rules and Procedures in agreement with the Governing Board, to meet the requirements of internal audit and agreed formats and adjusting the Accompanying rules and procedures accordingly.
- ◆ Improvements in the systems for day-to-day monitoring the real and pending expenditure and mechanisms for co-funding matching between different donors.



also built their expertise in different areas.

In terms of capacity building, the ERI SEE staff benefited from activities organized in cooperation with the partner institutions, with considerable expertise and experience in thematic areas (KulturKontakt Austria, ETF, RCC). ERI SEE staff also included international experts providing expertise on various issues – external evaluation in general education, gender equality, social and environmental sustainability – which in addition to providing expertise to the outputs of the project and participants to the ERI SEE events, also increased the capacities of the ERI SEE staff. Thus, working with the international experts, ERI SEE staff

Visibility was an additional organizational priority area. In order to increase its visibility, ERI SEE Secretariat issued its first newsletter, which went public in October 2019 and reached around 900 addresses in the region.

ERI SEE participated in relevant international conferences, such as The future of VET – Education and Training for the Economy 4.0, with focus on digital competences, organized in Vienna by KulturKontakt Austria on the occasion of celebrating its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary; Skills for the Future organized by the European Training Foundation in Turin, Effective Partnership for Enhanced Recognition organized by the Croatian Ministry of Science and Education in Mostar, with many peer learning, promotion and visibility and networking opportunities.



In 2019 ERI SEE was managing 2 active web pages – [www.erisee.org](http://www.erisee.org) and [www.wba4wbl.org](http://www.wba4wbl.org), with the third one (Joint information system facilitating recognition of academic qualifications) being in its testing version. The pages are regularly updated with the news and interlinked among themselves.

## Thematic part

### *Modernization of VET and cooperation between VET and Business Sector: Western Balkans Alliance for Work-based Learning*

Western Balkans Alliance for Work-based Learning (WBA for WBL) was established in 2016 under the Berlin Process with the purpose of enhancing cooperation between public and private sectors. The WBA for WBL is composed of the SEEVET Net group, which is the network



**WESTERN BALKANS  
ALLIANCE FOR  
WORK-BASED  
LEARNING**

of bodies in charge of implementing VET policies in the region on the one hand, and chambers of commerce from the region, members of the Western Balkans Chamber Investment Forum, on the other. The members are representatives from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Kosovo\*, Montenegro and Serbia. The WBA for WBL is coordinated by the ERI SEE and strongly supported by KulturKontakt Austria. In March 2019, it was awarded a project funded by the Austrian Development Agency through funds of Austrian Development Cooperation.

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The project was awarded the total budget of 564.400,00 eur for the period of 26 months, with the co-funding from ERI SEE, which is the lead applicant and in charge of the project, amounting to 18% (104.000,00 eur). Co-funding refers to the period of 26 months and includes operational costs (salaries, electricity, heating, rent etc.), and costs of several regional meetings.

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The project is called Towards regionally-based occupational standards – TO REGOS – and focuses on greater cooperation between the business and education sector in identifying tasks and activities relevant for successful performing of 5 occupations (hotel-restaurant technician, dry-construction worker, painter, tile-setter and floor-layer) within 2 sectors (construction industry and tourism and catering) in modernized working environments. The outcomes of the project are expected to be regionally-based standards for 5 occupations mentioned above, adopted in 6 economies, according to national specificities, and consequently transposed into the national qualifications standards. Other outcomes include the methodology for regionally-based occupational standards, stronger connections between business and education sectors, and study on feasibility of regionally-based qualifications standards.

The project consists of a number of national and regional activities, of which the following were performed in 2019:

- ◆ Workshop for fine-tuning the methodology
- ◆ Kick-off conference for all relevant stakeholders
- ◆ 3 Project management meetings
- ◆ 18 national consultation meetings (3 in each participating economy) between the business experts and education experts relevant for identifying tasks and activities for the occupation of the hotel-restaurant technician
- ◆ 2 regional preparatory meetings
- ◆ 1 final regional meeting confirming the first regionally-based occupational standard for hotel-restaurant technician



As the outputs so far, apart from the above-mentioned meetings, the following were achieved in addition:

- ◆ Increased cooperation between the business and education sector
- ◆ Draft methodology for developing regionally-based occupational standards
- ◆ 1st regionally-based occupational standard – for hotel-restaurant technician
- ◆ Maintenance of the website for the project activities and other activities regarding cooperation between business and education ([www.wba4wbl.com](http://www.wba4wbl.com))
- ◆ 6 national interim reports
- ◆ 1 regional interim report

Innovative aspect of the project lies, apart from the regional approach to standards of occupations, also in focusing on digitalization and how it can modernize occupations, as well as focusing on sustainable development, gender equality and social sustainability integrated into the regionally-based occupations.



ERI SEE is in charge of the overall management and coordination of the project, and as such organized all the activities mentioned above, coordinated and moderated them, made sure that the outputs were achieved, monitored the budget expenditure, was in charge of all the payments for all the activities, day-to-day communication with partners and reporting to the donor.

The full list of activities, results, outcomes and other information on the project is available on [www.wba4wbl.com](http://www.wba4wbl.com)

In addition to the work taking place within the scope of the project, the WBA for WBL network also gathered on the occasion of the conference The Future of VET – Education and Training for the Economy 4.0, focusing on digital competences and organized on the occasion of the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of KulturKontakt Austria, in Vienna on 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> November 2019.

The conference was organized as a follow-up to discussions held on the Future of VET during the Austrian Presidency Conference, in June 2018, and served as a greater exploration of the impact of the Economy 4.0 on VET, with the particular focus on occupational standards and qualifications standards. It gathered relevant actors coming from the VET and business sector, and international experts, who exchanged views on the new competences needed and their timely identification, success factors for acquisition of these competences and how training and learning environments need to be organized to ensure they are acquired. The conference was enriched with study visits to schools and training venues, which served as great learning opportunities on the subjects discussed. The conference also enabled an additional back-to-back meeting of the TO REGOS project partners to discuss how to incorporate the lessons learnt into the implementation of the project.



Photo credits: [KKA](#)

During the 30<sup>th</sup> KulturKontak Austria anniversary, it was also officially announced that, with 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020, KKA, a long-standing ERI SEE donor and supporter, is merging with the OEAD-GmbH, which is the Austrian central service point for European and international mobility and cooperation programmes in education, science and research. As such, OEAD coordinates an abundance of educational programmes, among others Erasmus+, CEEPUS, Citizens Science and Sparkling Science, and acts as contact point for the Bologna Process, ECVET (the European credit system for vocational training), Euroguidance, Europass, eTwinning, EPAL and the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). OEAD partners with the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF).

Regardless of the merging, the activities of KKA in supporting educational developments in the South Eastern Europe continue under the umbrella of OEAD.

### *Removing Obstacles to Recognition of Academic Qualifications*



Photo credits: [CIP](#)

The Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and ERI SEE Joint Working Group on Recognition of Academic Qualifications (JWG RAQ) was established in December 2017 under the Berlin process, with the goal of meeting the priorities outlined in the Multi-annual Programme on Regional Economic Area (MAP REA), endorsed by the prime-ministers of Western Balkans 6 economies (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Kosovo\*, Montenegro and Serbia). The main goal is to reduce obstacles to mobility of highly qualified workforce through joint standards and procedures for automatic recognition of quality-assured academic qualifications.

The RCC-ERI SEE Joint Working Group on Recognition of Academic Qualifications (WG RAQ) is composed of the representatives of ministries of education, ENIC/NARIC offices and Quality Assurance agencies for higher education. The group is coordinated by RCC and ERI SEE and regularly convenes and cooperates to achieve the desired outcomes. In the course of 2019, numerous activities were undertaken, as follows.





The biggest ERI SEE engagement was connected to the further developments of the Joint Information System facilitating the recognition of academic qualifications in the region. The Joint Information System (JIS) in one of its parts deals with higher education institutions accredited by regional QA agencies. In this respect it relies on the idea and structure of the Database of External Quality Assurance Results (DEQAR), developed by the European

Quality Assurance Register (EQAR), which contains the information about numerous higher education institutions accredited by QA agencies enlisted in EQAR. The idea of the JIS, in this particular segment, is to have a similar database for the region, prior to having the WB QA agencies enlisted in EQAR, as well as to prepare the WB QA Agencies for similar data management processes which will be required once regional QA agencies are enlisted in EQAR.



Home > Quality Assurance Systems > QA Register

- Quality Assurance in Higher Education
- Albania
- Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Kosovo\*
- Montenegro
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- Serbia
- QA Register**



Recognition of Academic Qualifications.



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## QA Register

### Database of External Quality Assurance Results

Search QA results by accrediting body

City

Institution

Albania	36	Kosovo*	0
Bosnia and Herzegovina	29	Montenegro	50
Republic of North Macedonia	0	Serbia	286

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The collection of data regarding the accredited higher education institutions, study programmes and relevant accompanying documentation started in 2019, with significant obstacles at system and individual level on the way. Some of the obstacles included the changes in the bodies in charge of quality assurance, with consequences including hand-over issues,

incomplete data, non-existence of data management systems, non-availability of digitalized documentation and similar. Other challenges included the lack of human resources in charge of managing and maintaining information, language issues, and lack of communication or feedback from officers in charge. Political issues among the economies of the region also present a challenge, resulting in some qualifications not being recognized across the region, and impaired communication.

To build-up the joint information system, in addition to the data regarding the accredited higher education institutions, the information about quality assurance systems, standards and bodies, as well as about the recognition – procedures, bodies and contacts, was collected, edited and maintained, with some data being verified by partner institutions and other still waiting for the verification.

All of the issues, as well as the verification and maintenance of data, were discussed with the partner economies on several occasions – on meetings held in March 2019 in Podgorica, June 2019 in Brussels, and on the occasion of the Western Balkans Platform for Education and Training (WBPET), in June 2019.

The other strand of activities regarding the WG RAQ referred to the development of the Declaration on the recognition of academic qualifications. The Declaration was being drafted in the first half of 2019 with the goal of having the WB6 economies agree on principles and rules for automatic recognition within the region. The Declaration emphasized transparent and fair recognition procedures, in line with the Lisbon Recognition Convention; trust, based on QA and accreditation, in line with the European Standards and Guidelines 2015; and cooperation and easy, reliable and trustworthy exchange of information.

The Declaration was being developed during the above mentioned meetings of the WG RAQ and on-line consultations. Following consensus among the parties involved, the Declaration addressed the recognition of qualifications issued by public HEIs (private excluded from the Declaration for the time being), the level, the conditions (duration and ECTS), and purposes (employment or academic studies) of recognition. It focused on qualifications issued within the Bologna system, and maintained the right of HEIs and competent authorities to check the authenticity of documents and to set specific admission criteria. The Declaration also determined the future focus of the WG RAQ and advancing regional cooperation in HE through:

- ◆ annual reports on the implementation of Declaration,
- ◆ initiation of expert discussion and recommendations on recognition of qualifications issued prior to the implementation of the Bologna system of three-cycle studies and third-cycle degrees,
- ◆ comparison of the established qualifications frameworks and
- ◆ discussion on possibilities of cooperation and participation in on-going initiatives aimed at ranking HEIs or propose a model for ranking HEIs in the WB
- ◆ and advancing cooperation in the area of QA (Peer learning, exchanges, informal networks, guidelines and procedures) and commitments to align the QA systems with the European Standards and Guidelines and external quality assurance performed by independent agencies in line with the ESG and registered in EQAR

The Declaration was officially presented during the 7<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting organized by the Western Balkans Platform on Education and Training (WB PET) in Belgrade in June 2019, where it was discussed and endorsed by the ministries from 6 WB economies.



The next meeting (7<sup>th</sup>) of the WG RAQ was planned for December 2019, to be held in Tirana, Albania, focusing on QA systems in the region; but due to serious cataclysmic events (a series of earthquakes in December 2019), the meeting was postponed for February 2020.

### *Quality Assurance in general education – Regional group of experts in Quality Assurance in general education*

The work of ERI SEE in the area of Quality Assurance in General Education, goes back to April 2017 when a regional group of experts in this area was established. The group has been coordinated by the ERI SEE ever since and consists of members coming from the ministries and national agencies in charge of education quality and external evaluation of knowledge and institutions. The group has been convening ever since, with a very high interest in continuing and intensifying joint work and cooperation.

In 2019, cooperation with the Standing International Conference of Inspectorates (SICI), which is an European association of bodies in charge of various aspects of quality assurance, was established. Albanian, Montenegrin and Serbian institutions are a part of SICI. Cooperation with SICI lead to the organization of the seminar on the subject of external evaluation and evaluator, with the participation of a Dutch expert, Mr Herman Franssen, who presented Dutch experiences and practices. The meeting was held in July 2019, and concluded, among others, that the cooperation at regional level in this area should be intensified and expanded, desirably in the form of a regional project. Themes for further exploration at regional level include training of trainers for external evaluation, exploration of initial training of external evaluators, monitoring of their work and receiving feedback, IT system on planning the external evaluation, reporting, use of results and data, data management, supporting documents on practices regarding the external evaluators. Another strongly emphasized component was the development of the quality culture, with the focus on internal evaluation and quality teams at school levels, and motivation of teachers to support the quality culture. The participants also showed interest in the study visits among themselves and job shadowing during the external evaluation process, as desirable peer learning activities.



Following the conclusions of the above-mentioned meeting, a project proposal was submitted to the Western Balkan Fund in December 2019. Western Balkan Fund is a regional organization which supports, among others, regional activities in the area of education, culture and science, however mainly open to educational institutions and non-government organisations and local organisations. The subject of the project proposal was Improvement in the Quality Assurance of general education in South Eastern Europe, and it envisaged several activities: development of the on-line questionnaire among the participating institutions regarding their system of data management, on-line survey on the status of the external evaluators and their initial and continuous training, a 2-day workshop for the representatives of institutes in charge of the quality assurance in general education in the region, on the subject of trainings for external evaluators and data management, development of recommendations for training of external evaluators, and analysis of data management systems status and needs. The project proposal is currently under evaluation.

### *Teacher Education and Training – SEE Network*

In this particular area of interest, ERI SEE partners with the European Training Foundation (ETF), and together they coordinate the South Eastern Europe Teacher Education and Training Network (SEE TET Network), established in May 2018. The purpose of the Network is to enable the exchange of existing practices and good examples and use regional cooperation as a learning opportunity as well as the space for developing more tangible outputs that can be transferred and used in national contexts. The Network gathers the representatives of regional agencies in charge of teacher education and trainings at system level and is committed to further expansion of its work and more intense regional cooperation.



The last meeting of the Network was organized in May 2019 in Podgorica, Montenegro. The focus of the meeting was how to harmonize the needs of teachers with actual offer and provision of trainings; and legitimize various forms of Continuous Professional Development - CPD, such as school to school visit, non-catalogue courses etc. The meeting was supported by University of Lower Austria, the representative of which, Ms

Michaela Tscherne, professor of Quality Management, presented Austrian example of needs analysis performed in her institution.

After group work, discussions and presenting various national practices and challenges, the following it was concluded that all the economies have some systems of needs analysis, which involve either school

coordinators, or teams of teachers, or principals. Communication within the school level exists; however, there are challenges to be considered in the future work of the SEE TET Network:

- ◆ Financial resources related to the needs of the professional development of teachers
- ◆ Organization of trainings at school level and their recognition at state level
- ◆ More active communication between schools and national authorities
- ◆ Assistance for teachers in definitions of their needs (individual needs analysis).

The participants also recognized there is a need for study visits and exchanges on the subject of CPD coordinators; and an idea of developing training modules among the economies regarding teacher education emerged. In VET and dual education, teacher trainings can be improved by involving employers, in cooperation with the municipalities, chambers, employers' union – creating a framework that would be used for training teachers. Also, what is further recognized as challenging is the recognition of informal learning. This involves individual initiative of teachers that they undertake on their own and at their own expense but is not recognized in any way. Also, more intense trainings of curricular reforms are needed, as these reforms hinge on the capability of teachers to implement them.

What also remains challenging is the connection between personal needs, needs of schools and needs at state level – these three perspectives need to be synchronized, which requires further elaboration. Self-evaluation of teachers is also a topic that is suggested to be discussed further, as it influences the individual professional development plan.

To conclude, a number of issues were identified that would require more intense regional cooperation which is recognized as useful and needed. All these conclusions will be taken into account in the future activities shaped for the benefit of the SEE TET Network and teacher education and training systems in general.

*\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence*

## Annex 1. List of activities organized by ERI SEE 1<sup>st</sup> January – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019 (by chronological order)

Activity	Theme	Date	Comment/Note
<b>ERI SEE Governing Board meeting</b>	Management	31 <sup>st</sup> January 2019, Belgrade	<p>The 26<sup>th</sup> meeting of the ERI SEE Governing Board was organised by the ERI SEE Secretariat, and hosted by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia.</p> <p>The meeting served as the basis for the discussion on and adoption of the relevant ERI SEE documents, such as Activity and Financial Reports for 2018; Work Programme and Financial Plan for 2019; updates on the most recent developments in the participating countries in the area of education and training, as well as the recent activities of ERI SEE partners and members of the Consultative Body (ETF and Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research).</p>
<b>Hiring of TO REGOS project coordinator</b>	Management/TO REGOS project	March 2019	The process of selection was finalized on 18 <sup>th</sup> March 2019.
<b>Hiring of financial manager</b>	Management/TO REGOS project	March 2019	The process of selection was finalized on 18 <sup>th</sup> March 2019.
<b>Recognition of academic qualifications - 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Workgroup on the recognition of academic qualifications</b>	Recognition of Academic Qualifications	27 <sup>th</sup> March 2019, Podgorica	The meeting was coordinated jointly by RCC and ERI SEE. Topics discussed included Joint Exercise on Recognition of Academic Qualifications in the Western Balkans, presentation of Joint information system of Academic Qualification and draft Declaration on Recognition of Academic Qualification.



<b>Recognition of academic qualifications - 6th meeting of the Workgroup on the recognition of academic qualifications</b>	Recognition of Academic Qualifications	13 <sup>th</sup> May 2019, Brussels	The meeting was coordinated jointly by RCC and ERI SEE. Topic discussed included the finalization of the text of the Declaration on Recognition of Academic Qualifications and presentation and agreements on the Joint Information System.
<b>Workshop for fine-tuning the methodology for regionally-based occupational standards</b>	Modernization of VET and cooperation between VET and business sector – TO REGOS project	15 <sup>th</sup> May 2019, Belgrade	<p>The meeting for the fine-tuning of the Common regional framework for the development of regionally-based standards of occupations (15<sup>th</sup> May 2019) aimed at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ elaborating the steps, rules and processes that will be used at regional level for successful development of regionally-based standards of occupations,</li> <li>♦ defining terminology that will be used for the project purpose, and</li> <li>♦ defining templates for the regionally-based standards of occupations.</li> </ul> <p>All three main objectives have been reached during the one-day workshop. In addition, the TO REGOS project partners utilised the opportunity to have in-depth discussion on the ways in which different national procedures can be reconciliated on regional level towards defining regionally-based standards of occupations.</p> <p>The meeting was attended by 30 participants: TO REGOS project partners, relevant stakeholders, a methodology expert, representatives of KulturKontak Austria.</p>
<b>Towards regionally-based occupational standards (TO REGOS) – first project management meeting</b>	Modernization of VET and cooperation between VET and business sector – TO REGOS project	16 <sup>th</sup> May 2019, Belgrade	<p>The main objective of the First project management meeting was to provide a detailed presentation of the project activities and timeline and open the floor for the discussion on the implementation steps and procedures.</p> <p>The meeting was attended by 30 participants: TO REGOS project partners, relevant stakeholders, a methodology expert and the representative of the KulturKontak Austria.</p>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of Teacher Education and Training Network (ETF and ERI SEE)</b>	Teacher Education and Training	29 <sup>th</sup> May 2019; Podgorica	The meeting gathered the SEE Teacher Education and Training Network, with 28 participants from bodies in charge of education and training of teachers and ministries for education from Albania, Croatia, Kosovo* Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia.

			<p>The meeting was realized in cooperation with the European Training Foundation and hosted a speaker from the University of Lower Austria.</p> <p>The meeting resulted in peer learning on various needs analysis systems, identifying the teachers' needs in relation to the school needs and government needs, and identifying the topics to be addressed from the regional level.</p>
<b>Kick-off conference for all relevant stakeholders within TO REGOS project</b>	Modernization of VET and cooperation between VET and business sector – TO REGOS project	11 <sup>th</sup> July 2019, Belgrade	<p>The conference was organised in Belgrade on July 11<sup>th</sup> 2019. It gathered over 70 stakeholders and experts working on the development of national and/or regionally-based occupational standards as well as the representatives of donors, international organisations and international projects.</p> <p>During the conference, the participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Were presented the latest developments on the subject of transnational qualifications standards in the region and at the EU level</li> <li>◆ Were presented the methodology for development of regionally-based occupational standards</li> <li>◆ Discussed the methodology</li> <li>◆ Were informed about other projects and donors in the region in the area of VET</li> <li>◆ Gathered for a back-to-back project management meeting regarding the TO REGOS project</li> </ul>
<b>Launching the WBA4WBL on-line portal and maintenance</b>	Modernization of VET and cooperation between VET and business sector – TO REGOS project	July 2019, Belgrade Continuously updated	<p>The WBA4WBL portal was launched on the occasion of the Kick-off conference for the TO REGOS project (Towards Regionally-based Occupational Standards)</p> <p>Portal provides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Information about the status and developments on the subject of work-based learning in the region</li> <li>◆ Relevant documents in this area</li> <li>◆ Continuous update with the activities and results achieved within the project</li> <li>◆ Information about related projects in the region</li> <li>◆ Additional tools and resources relevant for the subject of Work-based Learning (webinars, publications, guidelines ... developed by other institutions and projects)</li> </ul>

			♦ Contacts of experts in WBL in the region
<b>18 national events in the region (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Kosovo*, Montenegro and Serbia) on the definition of skills and competences needed by the business sector for the occupation of the hotel-restaurant technician</b>	Modernization of VET and cooperation between VET and business sector – TO REGOS project	September – December 2019	18 national meetings (3 per economy) of working groups were organized and held as a part of the TO REGOS project and as preparation (collecting national input) for regionally-based occupational standard for hotel-tourist technician. The meetings were organized by VET agencies and national Chambers of Commerce from the region, with the support of ERI SEE Secretariat. They gathered business experts providing their input about the skills needed and job descriptions expected for the occupation hotel-restaurant technician. The meetings resulted in the national proposals for key functions and activities to be integrated into the regionally-based occupational standard.
<b>ERI SEE Governing Board meeting</b>	Management	22 <sup>nd</sup> October 2019, Belgrade	The 27 <sup>th</sup> meeting served as the regular up-date on the status in the implementation of activities of ERI SEE as well as the financial status. Challenges, such as additional financial support needed to expand the activities, were discussed, with GB members suggesting a series of concrete measures for ERI SEE to explore. The input for preparation of documents (Work Plan, Financial Report, Financial Plan) for 2020 were discussed and gathered.
<b>Newsletter</b>	Visibility	23 <sup>rd</sup> October 2019	In October 2019 ERI SEE issued its Newsletter giving overview of the most relevant activities and projects, as well as brief information on relevant activities undertaken by partner organizations. The Newsletter was disseminated to around 900 regional contacts.
<b>QA Network training on external evaluation</b>	Quality Assurance in General Education	24 <sup>th</sup> and 25 <sup>th</sup> October	To organize the training/workshop anyway, ERI SEE partnered with the SICI, the Standing International Conference of Inspectorates, an association of national and regional inspectorates and QA agencies in Europe, which supports improvement of inspectorates and the professional competences of inspectors, promotes and supports partnership and cooperation between inspectorates, and actively participates in the international debate about evaluation and quality improvement in education. Albania, Montenegro and Serbia are members of SICI)

			N.B. the meaning of „inspectors and inspectorates“ in this context implies monitoring and evaluation of quality aspects and quality standards of institutions as well as checking the regularity of work of institutions.
<b>Reporting (Interim report) to the ADA for the TO REGOS project</b>	Modernization of VET and cooperation between VET and business sector – TO REGOS project	14 <sup>th</sup> November 2019	The first Interim report was submitted to the Austrian Development Agency, presenting national and regional activities taken place by 14 <sup>th</sup> September within the scope of the TO REGOS project. The Interim report, among others, also collected input received from national coordination points (NCPs) which was coordinated and analysed by ERI SEE.
<b>1st regional preparatory meeting within the scope of ADA project</b>	Modernization of VET and cooperation between VET and business sector – TO REGOS project	25 <sup>th</sup> November	Qualitative analysis and matching 6 national inputs to prepare the basis for the regionally-based occupational standards.
<b>2nd regional preparatory meeting within the scope of ADA project</b>	Modernization of VET and cooperation between VET and business sector – TO REGOS project	3 <sup>rd</sup> December	Qualitative analysis and matching 6 national inputs to prepare the basis for the regionally-based occupational standards - finalization
<b>Developing a concept note/project proposal for external evaluation</b>	Quality Assurance in General Education	8 <sup>th</sup> December 2019	The project proposal was prepared on the subject of external evaluation and data management, topics identified as relevant for regional cooperation at the meeting held in October 2019, and submitted to the Western Balkans Fund in December 2019.
<b>WBA4WBL regional meeting – developing regionally-based standard of occupation for hotel-restaurant technician</b>	Modernization of VET and cooperation between VET and	16 <sup>th</sup> December 2019	Final regional meeting within the TO REGOS project, where national inputs regarding occupational standards were consolidated so as to create the first regionally-based occupational standard for hotel-restaurant technician.  The meeting included representatives of business and education sectors, as well as external experts on gender, social sustainability and environment sustainability issues.

	business sector – TO REGOS project		
<b>Project management meeting for the TO REGOS project</b>	Modernization of VET and cooperation between VET and business sector – TO REGOS project	17 <sup>th</sup> December 2019	During the 3 <sup>rd</sup> Project Management Meeting, the agreements on further steps were made, regarding the next national meetings for hotel-restaurant technician as well as the activities regarding the standard of occupations within the construction sector. The budgetary issues were also discussed, as well as modifications to the methodology needed in order to reduce the costs.
<b>Development of a project for Teacher Education and Training</b>	Teacher Education and Training	Being developed	A brief concept note was developed by the ERI SEE, ETF and Serbian Institute for Advancement of Education on the subject of needs analysis. The concept note is to be finalized in the first quarter of 2020 and will be shared and consulted with the participants during the next SEE TET meeting.
<b>Development of the Joint Information System portal</b>	Recognition of Academic Qualifications	Continuous	JIS is being created with an aim to provide information on recognition procedures and processes for employment and education purposes in each participating economy and on the accreditation status of the higher education institutions and study programmes in the region.  The data on the accredited institutions are being collected, with difficulties – currently available for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Albania, Serbia and partly North Macedonia.  The JIS is planned to be a communication tool among JG RAG members, facilitating their exchange of problems and information relevant for fair and transparent recognition.  Continuous update.

## Annex 2. ERI SEE additional and related activities

Additional Activities	Date	Comment/Note
<b>Signing the Declaration of Intent between ERI SEE and ETF</b>	February 2019	The documents were signed by both parties, ERI SEE Director Ms Tina Šarić and ETF Director Mr Cesare Onestini. With this Declaration both parties committed themselves to working together in areas associated to their distinctive mandates consequently leading to better results at regional level.
<b>Endorsement of the Declaration on recognition of academic qualifications in the Western Balkans</b>	Endorsed during the Poznan Summit, 4-5 <sup>th</sup> July 2019	<p>The Declaration is developed by the RCC – ERI SEE Joint Working Group on Recognition of Academic Qualifications, composed by the representatives of ministries and ENIC/NARIC offices.</p> <p>The Declaration further mandates the JWG RAQ to focus on academic qualifications issued prior to the Bologna system; and lays commitments to align QA systems in the region with the European Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA.</p> <p>ERI SEE didn't participate but was involved in the preparation of the document</p>
<b>11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the SEE2020 coordination Board, RCC</b>	21 <sup>st</sup> March 2019, Sarajevo	The 11 <sup>th</sup> meeting of the SEE2020 coordination Board took place on 21 <sup>st</sup> March 2019 in Sarajevo. The meeting was focused on the SEE2020 and Multiannual Plan for Regional Economic Area (MAP REA) state of play, presentation and discussion of the Regional Dimension Coordinators' and other regional initiatives' work plans and discussions on the potential synergies and cooperation on regional level. ERI SEE participated as an active participant.
<b>RCC Annual Meeting</b>	8 <sup>th</sup> June 2019, Sarajevo	<p>The RCC Annual Meeting was held on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2019 in Sarajevo. Topics that were covered: Annual Report of the RCC 2018 – 2019, Strategy and Work Programme (SWP) 2020-2022 and Presentation of the Balkan Barometer 2019.</p> <p>ERI SEE participated as a guest.</p>
<b>4<sup>th</sup> Lead Negotiators' meeting for recognition of professional qualifications</b>	28 <sup>th</sup> and 29 <sup>th</sup> March 2019, Podgorica	<p>The text of the Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) for Doctors of Medicine and Dentists, Architects and Civil Engineers were discussed among the RCC, ERI SEE, relevant Ministry and Chambers representatives. The MRA was to facilitate the temporary mobility of professionals in the region.</p> <p>ERI SEE participated as an observer.</p>



<b>5th Lead Negotiators' Meeting for recognition of professional qualifications</b>	14 <sup>th</sup> May 2019, Brussels	Draft Agreement on Recognition of Professional Qualifications for Doctors of Medicine and Dentists, Architects and Civil Engineers was discussed among the participants – RCC, ERI SEE, CEFTA, Ministries and Chambers representatives with a view of preparing the Agreement for the Berlin Summit 2019 in Poznan. However, the Western Balkans Leaders took note that, despite the progress made, the negotiations of a Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications were not possible to be completed in time for the Poznan Summit and they committed to work to find appropriate forms to ensure the timely delivery of results in this regard.  ERI SEE participated as an observer.
<b>ETF – Third annual meeting of the ETF Forum for Quality Assurance in VET</b>	8 <sup>th</sup> – 10 <sup>th</sup> October 2019, Turin	The aim of the 2019 annual meeting of the ETF Forum is to review the Forum work plan activities and agree on the plans beyond 2019. Specifically, the objectives of the meeting are as follows: 1. To share information on quality assurance developments and dissemination of Forum activities and approaches in the Forum Member countries; 2. To discuss the lessons learnt in the trial peer visit in Tunisia in April 2019 and to present the upcoming peer visit to take place in early 2020; 3. To review the outcomes of Modules 3 and 4 of mapping of quality indicators, as well as to discuss how to use the mapping results for a new activity on quality indicators; 4. To discuss and agree on the new strategy and plan for 2020-2022. The purpose of ERI SEE participation is to learn from the QA group on VET about their activities and explore possible synergies or good practices that can be used in the QA group in general education.
<b>Regional Workshop “Education and Training for the Economy 4.0: Digital Skills and Competences”</b>	18 <sup>th</sup> – 19 <sup>th</sup> November 2019, Vienna	Workshop was organized on the occasion of the 30 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of KulturKontakt Austria. It provided the opportunity to share experience on how vocational education and training can meet the needs for new skills and use the potential of digital learning environments in the occupational standards developed within the ADA project.  It also provided an opportunity for the TO REGOS project partners to meet and discuss the notion of digitalization in the TO REGOS project.  ERI SEE participated as a co-organizer with active role.
<b>Ministry of Education and Science, Croatia – Workshop within Erasmus+ project: Effective partnership for enhanced recognition</b>	20 <sup>th</sup> November, Mostar	ERI SEE presented the current developments in the building of the Joint Information System and synergies with the Database of European Quality Assured Results (DEQAR)

