



Core Objectives of the Stability Pact and respective Achievables for 2005

Local Democracy and Cross-Border Cooperation

The aim is to promote efficient local governance and to enhance co-operation among local actors (governmental, civic, and private sector) across national borders to foster regional co-operation in SEE. This will result in greater economic convergence, social cohesion and reconciliation. Furthermore, it is necessary to build capacity in order to enhance efficient local governance; strengthen national dialogue among government, local authorities and civil society; simultaneously promote regional cross-border cooperation networks through community-oriented projects, in cooperation with local and international partners.

- Monitor and facilitate the implementation of the commitments made by the Ministerial Conference according to the Memorandum of Understanding and the Work Programmes for Better Local Government in cooperation with the Council of Europe, envisaging a specific follow-up strategy.
- Enhance cross-border cooperation initiatives in close consultation with the European Commission. Strengthen the already established Euroregions and micro-regions and promote specific cross-border projects with the active participation of local communities and international partners.
- Promote cooperation between local and regional authorities in SEE and EU member states, as well as expand cross-border cooperation networks within the EU to SEE, in cooperation with the Committee of the Regions.
- Based on the pilot project in 2004, update and continue the mapping exercise on donors' contribution on local governance issues in the region, together with OECD and OSI.
- Facilitate local government capacity building through institutional and fiscal dialogue and enhanced transparency, in particular through citizens' access and civil society participation with local authorities and national associations. Enhance cooperation between SEE local authorities through further support to NALAS.

Parliamentary Co-operation

In order to strengthen the democratisation process and increase the efficiency and transparency of governing structures as well as ongoing reform processes in SEE, capacity building is required for legislative bodies throughout the region. Supporting parliaments in the region and establishing functional networks between SEE parliaments thus is a priority for the Stability Pact. Towards this end the Stability Pact aims to enhance the exchange of information on parliamentary cooperation activities between international and regional partner organisations, facilitate links between committees of different parliaments dealing with similar issues, institutionalise training programmes for newly elected MPs and parliamentary staff, as well as promoting twinning between parliaments from the region and outside.

- Provide support and input for institutions already involved with or interested in participating in activities with parliamentarians in SEE.
- Participation in the launching of initiatives of parliamentary cooperation in view of capacity building in parliaments as well as the establishment of informal networks between parliamentarians in the region, in particular with a view to the process of European integration, as well as in the fields of economy, organised crime, energy and education.
- Actively promote twinning between parliaments of the region and other countries, especially with the new EU member-states.
- Create a local network of support within parliaments in the region.
- Support existing and potential networks of young and women parliamentarians.
- Set up a web site for a Parliamentary Information Network.

Energy and other Regional Infrastructure

Ensure that both the countries of the region and the international community take a regional strategic approach to infrastructure development based on co-financing and institutionalised partnerships including transport, energy and telecommunications, with a view to prioritising capital investment in order to benefit from economies of scale.

- Fostering political consensus for successful completion of negotiations, signing, ratification and implementation of the treaty on the creation of the Energy Community of South Eastern Europe (ECSEE): this includes ongoing participation in the Athens Forum, organisation, as appropriate, of further meetings of high level advisers to prime ministers as well as with parliamentarians, social partners and NGOs of the signatory countries.
- Continuing efforts to ensure private sector interest in the opportunities created by the ECSEE through the organisation of or the participation in industry roundtables or other conferences on the SEE energy sector.
- As regards the evolving list of priority infrastructure projects of regional significance, continued efforts to remove bottlenecks on project preparation or implementation through the organisation, on request, of “facilitation” meetings between countries and international financial institutions (IFI) and bilateral donors concerned and monitoring of follow up.
- Based on the concept paper developed in 2004, facilitation and promotion of a limited number of Public Private partnerships (PPP) in the field of infrastructure by involving IFI and BAC participants to demonstrate the applicability of the PPP concept in SEE.
- Pro-active role in the Infrastructure Steering Group (ISG), encouraging an effective implementation of its mandate that was recently extended to water and environmental infrastructure. Facilitate the development of political consensus among different partners for the regional sectoral strategies.

Trade, Investment and Employment

To foster a business climate conducive to investment, trade and employment, through the implementation of the free trade agreements (FTA) and the use of monitoring processes such as the critical time bound targets of the Investment Compact, thereby fostering capital and know-how transfer and thus the basis for sustainable economic development in South Eastern Europe

- Deepening of trade liberalisation through identification, reduction and elimination of non-tariff barriers (NTBs). Organisation of a Ministerial meeting in March to endorse the way forward on a multilateral free trade agreement for SEE.
- Fostering political consensus (not only of Government officials but also of parliamentarians and social partners) for the implementation of the investment oriented reforms to which the SEE countries commit themselves in the framework of the Investment Compact (IC), with emphasis on FDI policy and SME development.
- Continued improvement of the investment climate in SEE through participation in investment promotion events to enhance the image of the region in the international business community.
- Fostering structured feedback from private sector to governments in SEE, ensuring regular dialogue via the national Foreign Investors Councils, the Business Advisory Council for SEE (BAC), as well as focused country visits of BAC members and Investment Compact teams.
- Further to the Bucharest Ministerial Declaration of October 2003, promoting the formulation and implementation of improved employment policies in SEE using, in particular, the ILO/CoE led peer review process.
- In continuation of the cross cutting theme of "Entrepreneurship and Employment", promoting awareness of the employment generation potential of SMEs (provided the policy environment is favourable) and foreign investment as well as organisation of a series of workshops on specific issues, including problems or regional de-industrialisation, synergies among public and private actors and civil society as well as training requirements better geared to employability and entrepreneurship.

Fighting organised crime

Organised crime and corruption undermine the political, economic and social development prospects of the countries of SEE. Fighting organised crime is thus essential for the development of the region and requires sound judicial systems and efficient law enforcement institutions. Effective action against transnational crime requires cooperation between SEE governments and with the EU and other international partners, aiming at a comprehensive approach in combating organised crime, by facilitating regional cooperation between networks of public prosecutors, legislators, the judiciary and law enforcement officials. SP initiatives such as SPOC, SPAI and the Police Forum are offering fora for capacity building, policy advocacy and revision of legislation, supporting action at the national and regional level, in partnership with the SEECP, the European Commission and with operational support of the SECI Transborder Crime Fighting Centre in Bucharest.

- Monitor the implementation of the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime and stimulate governments in taking legal and practical steps to improve its implementation.
- Enhance regional cooperation on legal and policy aspects of combating organised crime by strengthening SPOC and facilitate an SEE Convention on Police Cooperation.
- Support the strengthening of the SECI Transborder Crime Fighting Centre, in accordance with the recommendations contained in the EC financed expert assessment report, and encourage the Centre, as well as SEEPAG to develop into a strong partner for European law enforcement institutions and other international partners.
- Support SEE governments in achieving the targets set in the Bucharest Declaration by the SEECP Ministers of JHA on the full use of existing co-ordination mechanisms at national and regional levels for the fight against organised crime as well as addressing any identified gaps.
- Through the SPAI Regional Liaison Office in Sarajevo (RSLO) encourage SEE states to ratify the UN Anti-corruption convention (Merida) and assist governments in taking the necessary legal and practical steps. Develop the RSLO into a regional centre of excellence for capacity building and anti-corruption policy development.
- Support through SPOC and the Police Forum the activities in SEE of the OSCE Special Representative on Trafficking in Human Beings by inspiring dedicated law enforcement as appropriate.
- Support through the Police Forum, the Organised Crime Training Network and in cooperation with the SECI Centre, the existing regional cooperation mechanisms to address specific organised crime related problems, such as stolen vehicles and drugs trafficking.

Managing and stabilising population movements

Migration being one of the key challenges SEE is facing (regarding refugee return, brain drain, limited freedom of movement within the region as well as with the EU), development of regional strategies to handle population movements in a more comprehensive manner is crucial in the areas of asylum, legal and illegal migration as well as border management. By establishing the MARRI Regional Forum in April 2004, the Migration, Asylum, Refugee Return Initiative has effectively moved towards regional ownership, while the Stability Pact will remain involved. Under the Ohrid Border Process the five SAP countries are moving towards integrated border management in accordance with European standards. Travel restrictions within the region are a major impediment to economic development and normalization of relations in SEE.

- Support the MARRI Regional Forum by providing policy advice and by liaising with international partners in order to solicit their expertise and views on the issues addressed by the Forum, by participating in the “Friends of the MARRI Regional Forum”, which will monitor and support the activities of the Regional Forum, and by closely cooperating with the MARRI Regional Centre in Skopje as the principal support mechanism and secretariat for the Regional Forum.
- Facilitate implementation of the MARRI Access to Rights project through the Regional Centre.
- Initiate a process to create more transparency on visa requirements and procedures within SEE and to remove unnecessary impediments for SEE citizens who are applying for visa for travel within SEE.

- Support further progress under the Ohrid border management process by facilitating the process, by monitoring implementation and by seeking contributions from international stakeholders to strengthen border management capacities in the region.