

South Eastern European Education Reform Initiative
ACTION PLAN

endorsed by the Second Working Meeting of Senior Officials from South
Eastern Europe, held in Predeal/Romania from May 29 - 31, 2003

The Working Meeting of Senior Officials from South Eastern Europe (Vienna, December 5 - 7, 2002) identified the following **priority areas for education development and reform:**

1. Adjustment and review of existing national legal frameworks in line with ongoing European developments and national reform priorities;
2. Decentralisation of education management and administration, with a focus on quality enhancement and accountability;
3. Development of education management information systems and quality assurance mechanisms
4. Curriculum reform in line with European trends and developments
5. Widening access to quality education and ensuring equal opportunities - taking account of gender equality - for national minorities, especially Roma communities, and other disadvantaged groups including members of low income groups, people with disabilities, citizens from isolated rural communities, etc.
6. Promotion of education for democratic citizenship in both formal and non-formal education programmes
7. Ensuring access to, and effective use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT)
8. Development of opportunities for lifelong learning as a key means to stimulate economic regeneration in the region

9. VET, especially establishing links between education and labour market;

These priorities specifically address the most important educational needs in the region. They are fully in line with the three strategic goals identified by the European Commission for the "Detailed Work Programme on the Follow-up of the Objectives of Education and Training Systems in Europe" as well as the Copenhagen Declaration.

Priorities 1 - 4 and 9 fall within Strategic Objective 1: Improving the quality and effectiveness of education and training systems; priorities 5 - 7 and 9 are in line with Strategic Objective 2: Facilitating the access of all to education and training systems; priorities 8 and 9 are covered by Strategic Objective 3: Opening up education and training systems to the wider world.

The Senior Officials also emphasized the relevance of all 13 objectives and 42 key issues within the work programme to the development of quality education provision in the region. In this context, they highlighted the importance of the following issues if long-term success is to be achieved:

- Securing sufficient funding for sustainable educational development
- Ensuring general public support for education reform
- Developing improved channels for communication between institutions and governments both within the countries of the region, and at European and international level
- Developing human resources and institutional capacity

This South Eastern European Education Reform Initiative aims to contribute to the overall objective of educational development in the region through focusing upon improvement of structured communication, and development of institutional capacity.

The following instruments are envisaged to facilitate implementation:

- Regular meetings (twice a year) in the region of Senior Officials from Ministries of Education and Higher Education from South Eastern Europe and other European countries including representatives of the civil society within the framework of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe Task Force Education and Youth. These meetings will serve as a forum to exchange experience made in the reform implementation, to foster support partnerships, to discuss issues of regional concern and to formulate joint recommendations on education reform and on concrete action plans and timetables. This forum of Senior Officials will also review the overall implementation of the "South Eastern European Education Reform Initiative".
- To further enhance regional ownership, a secretariat in the region will be set up to provide a support structure for the initiative.
- Peer reviews for the participating South Eastern European countries drawing on expertise from organisations such as OECD, ETF, EUA, Council of Europe, World Bank, NGOs and other independent actors in this field to review achievements and provide recommendations in the respective educational development processes
- Build capacity in key areas of educational reform
- Mapping and setting up a database of good practice examples in the region in the framework of the South Eastern European Educational Co-operation Network
- Support through existing networks (e.g. the South Eastern European Educational Co-operation Network and its nodes) to build capacity and to strengthen the dissemination of information on education development and reform both in South Eastern European countries and on a wider European level.
- Twinning of institutions, and development of institutional and academic partnerships