

# Task Force Education And Youth

Enhanced Graz Process

Working Table 1, Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe

## *Activity Report January 2002 - July 2002*

### **1. Activities within the Strategy 2001/2002**

#### **Extended Working Group Meeting on Policy Development and System Improvement (Ljubljana, February 21, 2002)**

30 participants with strong involvement of ministry representatives and other experts from Southeast Europe discussed necessary elements and procedures to support regional co-operation with respect to current and future activities of the Working Group within the framework of the Task Force.

Special attention was given to the following issues:

- Status quo and further development of the so called Quick Start Projects monitored by the Working Group (PISA, South East European Co-operation Network, Kosovo Education Centre, OECD Thematic Reviews);
- The role of various stocktaking analysis carried out by OECD, Council of Europe, the European Training Foundation and other institutions for strengthening networking and co-operation and for promoting sustainable educational reform in the region;
- National and regional dissemination activities within the Strategy 2001/2002 and their impact on the current action programme of the Task Force Education and Youth.

Participants emphasised the need for enhanced regional co-operation to be linked closely to national policy development and voiced strong support for the following activities in 2002:

- The promotion of international conferences to support the launch of the OECD Thematic Reviews within the respective educational systems.
- The ETF VET Reform Policy Peer Reviews in the Western Balkans, to be organised in 2002/2003
- Further development of the Southeast European Education Co-operation Network (SEE-ECN: <http://www.see-educoop.net>) with special attention to the already existing nodes in the region;
- Organisation of a regional workshop on "Inspection/Evaluation of Schools" offered by the Standing International Conference of Central and General Inspectorates of Education (SICI);

### **Launches of the OECD Thematic Reviews:**

Both, the OECD Thematic Reviews on 10 educational systems in the region plus the OECD recommendations on co-operation in the region have been finalised and published by June 2002.

Based on the Reviews, which offer policy recommendations to governments and donors, a series of conferences in the region has been planned for 2002. Such events have already taken place in Serbia on January 16-17, 2002, in Montenegro on January 18, 2002, in Croatia on May 24/25, and in Kosovo on June 10-11, 2002. It is expected that by the end of 2002 similar activities will take place in Albania, Bulgaria, Moldova and Romania. Consultation with other countries is ongoing.

The conferences offer the opportunity for consultation processes on national and regional education reform strategies and for promoting co-operation networks among regional key actors and donors. The Task Force, as co-organiser, emphasises the need to involve key policy makers from SEE in all conferences as well as to attract the donor community and the media.

The conferences in Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia and Kosovo clearly showed the important input the OECD recommendations provide for the formulation of the respective policy documents. Well-prepared media coverage showed the increasing interest of key stakeholders in education. Up to now these events have given almost 1200 participants (international organisations, ministry representatives of the region, experts and the education community) the opportunity for in-depth discussions on major key issues of educational reform, e.g. decentralisation of the education system, curriculum reform, teacher training, quality assurance, democratic principles in education, etc. and on future steps of the implementation of education reform. Ministry representatives and experts of SEE countries also explored possible areas of future cross-border co-operation in educational reform. Written documentation on the conferences are already available for Serbia and Croatia, Montenegro and Kosovo will follow in the beginning of the second half of 2002. (see: <http://www.see-educoop.net>)

Consultations with the Ministries of Education of other SEE countries have taken place in the recent weeks, further launching events are expected to take place in autumn in Albania, Bulgaria and Romania and possibly Moldova.

### **OECD Regional Overview:**

Based on the Thematic Reviews the regional perspective of education development in SEE countries has also been analysed in a regional overview of the common problems and reform needs of SEE countries. Although there are no general regional solutions for national education reform challenges, regional consultation processes in targeted areas substantially support the development and implementation of reform strategies at national levels. The regional overview has been discussed during the OECD Kosovo Education Conference in June 2002. (see <http://www.see-educoop.net>)

### **Networking/ Dissemination of Information among Educational Communities in the Region and towards the wider European Education Area**

The SEE Educational Co-operation Network (SEE ECN) with a hub in Ljubljana and a network of nodes in the region is the information and dissemination backbone of the Task Force network. The ECN is the most comprehensive virtual educational network in South Eastern Europe. Membership currently includes around 170 institutions and 90 individual experts predominately from the region. Nodes in ten countries of the region (established in autumn and winter 2001/2002) together with a co-ordination hub in Ljubljana facilitate the network, spread information, search for new materials and translate them. During the first phase of the project the communication platform for this network has been developed into a multi-lingual homepage with a special focus on the languages of the region (and English).

Via its regional and international network the ECN collects and constantly updates information on educational reform processes in South Eastern Europe and gives support to education researchers, policy analysts, decision makers as well as teachers and other practitioners: key documents (strategy papers, curricula, legislation, reports, good practice etc.) are collected in a virtual library and translated into languages of the region. An expert database has been established to provide information on available expertise in various areas. A calendar of events provides a regular overview of activities in SEE (workshops, conferences, meetings, etc.). In areas of common interest relevant documents on education reform in the wider European context are collected, etc. Thus, ECN has proved its role of a *regional educational resource centre*.

During the first phase the ECN has already exceeded the character of a purely virtual network. Two conferences were organised (Bled, October 2001, OSI and CEPS; Bohinj, April 2002; IBE UNESCO and CEPS) aimed at human resource development and strengthening direct co-operation of regional and international experts. Background materials on a particular theme (educational legislation; drafting new curricula) had been collected in advance, translated into regional languages and put on the site to make participants possible to study and prepare for active participation at the (three-day) conference. These two conferences fully confirmed the need for such activities and gave experience to be used in future.

The first project phase of the ECN will be completed by August/September 2002. The second phase will focus on the further elaboration of the regional education resource network, the strengthening of the nodes as integral part of the network and the provision of targeted capacity building and institution building measures for educators in SEE. To provide sufficient funding for this next phase, the Task Force currently negotiates with the donor community.

## **2. Stability Pact – 6<sup>th</sup> Working Table 1 Meeting, Istanbul, June 12-13**

The 6<sup>th</sup> Working Table 1 meeting focused on regional/cross-border co-operation and local democracy, and history teaching, which are key features for the democratisation and stabilisation process in South Eastern Europe. The major areas for action in the field of local democracy were identified as local government capability, fiscal decentralisation, citizen's participation and involvement of civil society especially through NGOs. Another main issue will be to enhance local ownership. A Steering Committee will be established to co-ordinate activities define priority areas and a Plan of Action for 2003 in the field of local democracy and cross-border co-operation.

Participants also emphasised the importance of History and History Teaching for reconciliation and democratisation, as well as its regional nature. They underlined the need to new teaching methods and approaches in history education. Upon the initiative of the Turkish Co-Chair of Working Table 1 the history of the Ottoman Empire in South Eastern Europe was considered as one of the important topics to be addressed at a regional level in history research and history teaching in the future.

The Table confirmed the Pact's commitment to coherence and complementary to both the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP) and the accession process for EU candidate countries which participate in the Stability Pact.

The Chair of the Task Force Education and Youth, Mr. Anton Dobart, presented the achievements and concrete objectives to be achieved within the framework of the "Strategy 2001/2002" in the next six months, e.g. to hold a meeting of senior officials of Ministries of Education from SEE countries together with EU member states and representatives of the European Commission. The aim of the meeting would be to discuss regional education reform priorities in SEE countries on

the basis of the OECD Thematic Reviews as well as effects of EU "Working Programme on the Objectives of Education" on education policy reform in SEE countries.

Furthermore the TF presented a short overview on the status of the Quick Start projects (c.f. below) and on the new regional projects developed in the areas of EDC, Young People, and History Teaching and lobbied for their financial support.

Working Table 1 participants appreciated the progress made by the Task Force Education and Youth and underlined their support for education and youth issues also in the future. The Chairman's Conclusions as well as the latest STP Newsletter are available on <http://www.stabilitypact.org>.

### **3. 6<sup>th</sup> Conference of European Ministers of Education (Bratislava, 16 – 18 June)**

The conference "Education in the New Millennium", organized by the Spanish EU-Presidency, the European Commission and the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic focussed on political co-operation on the future objectives of education and training systems in Europe.

Specifically, it focussed on 2 key themes within the detailed work programme on the follow-up of the objectives of education and training systems to 2010:

1. Supporting quality in education
2. Access to and attractiveness of education.

Within the Final Communiqué, Ministers welcomed the achievements of the Enhanced Graz Process/ Task Force Education and Youth of the Stability Pact and its strategy for future activities. They commended the Task Force for its efforts especially in terms of establishing a more structured process on perspectives for mid to long-term cooperation between the countries of the EU and the Accession/Stabilisation and Association Process countries. This cooperation should represent a further step for integrating SEE countries into the European area of Education. Furthermore, the Chair of the Task Force invited the Ministers from Southeast Europe to nominate senior officials to participate in a working meeting to be held in Vienna in December 2002. This meeting will discuss future strategies to facilitate policy development and system improvement both on national and regional level with respect to the Objectives Report.

### **4. Working Groups**

Besides the meeting of the WG Policy Development and System Improvement (c.f. item 1) three more working group meetings were held in 2002:

The **meeting of the WG Education for Democratic Citizenship (Ljubljana February 22-23)** with 34 participants (key experts in EDC/MoD from SEE countries, Ministry representatives, representatives of international institutions, and donor representatives) focused on the three main reports produced in the framework of the WG: the stocktaking research on EDC policies in Southeast Europe, the "Denied the future?" report on access to education for Roma children, and the monitoring report on the Quick Start Projects.

Based on these reports participants discussed and identified priorities and actions for the development of EDC and Management of Diversity in SEE, both at policy and project level, among them:

- integrating EDC/MoD into general education reforms

- considering developments both at national and regional level as complementary and necessary
- awareness raising on policy level, especially in view of the identified "compliance gap" between EDC policies and practise
- combining top-down with bottom-up approaches
- importance of teacher training as a key area for reform
- establishing partnerships between international institutions and NGOs
- importance of evaluation and monitoring and quality assurance of practises and policies.

Following the WG meeting an expert group considered new projects, which had been submitted until 15 February within the TF call for proposals. Through a screening procedure, a list of accepted projects has been established, which has been sent out to the TF members earlier.

Ms. Michela Cecchini, CoE, coordinator of the Working Group EDC, has taken a leave from the CoE and therefore has also resigned as WG coordinator. The Task Force would like to thank her very much for her great efforts in the WG EDC and the fruitful co-operation she has offered the Task Force network. Her successor in the Council of Europe will be nominated by autumn and will also take charge of the Working Group agenda.

### **Meeting of the Working Group Higher Education, Vienna, March 21.**

The meeting of the HEWG was held in Vienna on 21 March 2002. The meeting gathered more than 40 representatives of higher education systems and institutions from SEE, as well as of other major higher education partners across Europe. The representatives from FYR of Macedonia, Kosovo, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia made brief presentations of current Higher Education policy developments in their countries and HE systems. Based on these reports participants agreed on five areas, where useful experience and support could be gained, at both institution and system level, by increased regional cooperation, and also in view of ensuring closer integration with the Bologna Process:

- Legislation
- University structures, with facilities as constituent parts of one legal institution
- Quality assurance
- ECTS (European Credit Transfer System)
- Ethical standards and transparency

The HEWG will focus its future activities on the fields mentioned above.

### **Working Group Young People, Bucharest, March 21/22.**

The Working Group meeting provided an opportunity to discuss the implementation status of the Romanian Youth Action Plan, which was also presented to the wider public in a press conference with participation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister and the Deputy Minister of Youth and Sports.

Further topics for discussion were the development of Youth Action Plans in other SEE countries, e.g. Serbia, Macedonia, Croatia, as well as the EC White Paper on Youth and its possible extension to countries of SEE.

The Working Group members discussed the idea of holding an extended Working Group meeting, which should focus on the presentation/dissemination of good practise in youth projects, discuss findings of regional youth research, the White Paper process as well as discuss and evaluate the achievements of the Working Group Young People and its priorities for future activities.

The meeting should gather participants from local and international youth NGOs, experts, representatives of governments, international institutions, the donor community as well as the Stability Pact, and is envisaged to take place in the first half of 2003.

The full reports on the Working Group meetings are available on <http://www.see-educoop.net>.

The next Working Group meetings will take place in Kotor on September 6/7 (Young People) and in Tirana, November 21/22 (History Teaching) and will focus on a critical review of the achievements of the Working Groups made so far as well as on future priorities and activities.

## **5. Project Development**

### **The Quick Start Projects**

Two years after the Stability Pact Regional Funding Conference in March 2000 the majority of Quick Start Projects has now successfully been implemented, some projects just had or are about to have their final project presentations.

Some of the projects have already received financing for a follow-up phase, e.g. the project on "Development of History Teaching Materials and Teacher Training in Albania, Bulgaria, FYR of Macedonia", and the "youthNET", whose next phase will be financed also by the European Commission and the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

A (new) brochure on the Quick Start Projects 2000-2002 has been produced and is available at the TF Office and electronically on <http://www.see-educoop.net>.

### **New Projects in 2002**

The experience and expertise gained in the 44 Quick Start Projects provides a solid basis for the next phase of targeted project development, which has started in early 2002.

In the fields of "Policy Development and System Improvement" and "Vocational Education and Training" the focus for 2002 is on the analysis of education policies in SEE countries and on the development of reform strategies, as in the launch of the OECD Thematic Reviews and the ETF Peer Reviews on VET. These reviews will provide the framework for the identification of priority projects in the respective areas.

In the field of Higher Education the TF works in close co-operation with other higher education networks and institutions and promotes sustainable regional co-operation in SEE and towards the EU, considering the European-wide Bologna Process as an important incentive for the HE reform process in SEE.

A number of regional pilot projects on governance and capacity building in pre-university education and higher education are under way or will start soon, e.g. "Twinning Regional School Administrations in Serbia" (project start planned for 2002) and the "Regional University Network on Governance and Management of Higher Education in SEE" (has started in January 2002).

In the areas of Education for Democratic Citizenship, History/History Teaching and Young People new priority projects have been identified based on the results of the Quick Start Projects, the TF Strategic Framework and Priorities and on consultations with donors.

For EDC 11 priority projects have been identified, for Young People 9 projects, for History 7 projects. with an overall financial volume of 8.5 Mio Euro, the amount of funding requested is 6.2 Mio Euro. These projects clearly meet the identified key priorities and foremost have a mid-term perspective in order to ensure sustainability and impact on the education and youth sector.

A number of projects was also submitted to the Task Force, which, according to the specific nature of their profile, do not explicitly fit into the thematic fields of the existing working groups but clearly meet the overall TF criteria.

The Task Force is currently looking for financial support for these new projects among the donor community in order to contribute to education reform activities not only at policy level, but also at the concrete project level. First concrete pledges are expected for autumn 2002.