

# **Task Force Education And Youth**

Enhanced Graz Process

Working Table 1, Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe

## **ACTIVITY REPORT**

December 2002\* – October 2003

\*The previous report period from December 2002 to May 2002 included for a better understanding of the latest developments within the TFEY.

**October 2003**

## **1. OVERALL STRATEGY**

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Education and training play an important role in responding to the challenges of knowledge societies, globalisation and the enlargement of the EU. This has also been acknowledged by the European Commission and the European Council, which have requested that Education and Training be explicitly recognised as a key priority domain in the Lisbon strategy.

The Task Force Education and Youth/Enhanced Graz Process actively promotes the issue of education and youth in the region recognising the crucial role those issues play for CEE and SEE countries on their way to becoming member states of the European Union.

Building upon the systematic approach of the so called "Strategy 2001" the Task Force Education and Youth/Enhanced Graz Process has set two objectives for its future work:

- to continue its support of national education reform efforts in the perspective of the EU integration and
- to actively promote regional co-operation at system, expert and civil society level in support of the Stabilisation and Association Processes.

Both aims are fully in line and substantially promote in the field of education and youth the two main strategic objectives of the Stability Pact for 2003, namely enhanced complementarity with the SAP and regional and cross-border co-operation.

Regional co-operation is an indispensable instrument to pool the accumulated experience and expertise in order to promote education development, especially within the framework of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

Regional co-operation is for example crucial for the creation of regional university networks necessary to increase student mobility at regional level, to facilitate the recognition of diplomas, etc., which are the main criteria for the participation of SEE countries in the Bologna Process.

## **2. REALISED ACTIVITIES**

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### **A. EDUCATION REFORM INITIATIVE OF SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE (ERI SEE)**

With the Enlargement Process of the European Union having progressed substantially, the "European Perspective" now becomes more relevant for the SAP countries. Education reform in SEE countries should now take even more strongly into account European trends and developments, as meeting the evolving European standards in education will be a precondition for the inclusion into the wider European Area of Education.

Having successfully supported education reform processes in a number of SEE countries by 2002 and the inclusion of SEE countries into the European Union becoming more tangible, the overall TFEY strategy in the field of education and youth now lays a stronger focus on linking both developments more closely.

The Task Force Education and Youth/Enhanced Graz Process together with Senior Officials from South Eastern Europe now proposes an initiative aimed at supporting education reform in SEE, taking

into account both country-specific needs and demands in education reform as well as present trends in the development of the envisaged European Area of Education.

The Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE) will serve as an interface between ongoing SEE education reform at national level and European trends in order to achieve common European standards in education i.e. the EU "Detailed Work Programme on the follow-up of the objectives of education and training systems in Europe", which defines 3 strategic goals and 13 associated objectives to be achieved by EU and accession countries by 2010, the "Bologna Process" and the "Bruges-Copenhagen Process". It supports SEE countries in the transition period and helps them improve the achievements attained so far in their integration into the European mainstream.

Its aim is to provide access to expertise in education reform of European countries and also facilitate capacity building helping the region to develop its own forces that will support SEE countries to achieve common European standards in education.

The Initiative will be flexible according to the individual pace of implementation of the participating countries. A final date for orientation, however, is the year 2010. This is a target date for both EU countries to achieve objectives of the EU and for the countries participating in the Bologna process to achieve the goals of the Bologna Declaration.

Supporting the idea of regional ownership, the overall co-ordination of the (ERI SEE) is envisaged to be transferred to the region by the end of 2004, through establishment of a regional secretariat.

- ***First Working Meeting of the Senior Officials from South Eastern Europe – Vienna, December 5-7, 2002***

Over 40 key policy-makers from South Eastern Europe and other European countries as well as representatives of different international organisations operating in the education sector attended the first meeting of Senior Officials from South Eastern Europe held in Vienna. This meeting provided a unique opportunity to present the EU Detailed Work Programme and deepen discussions on country-specific reform needs in SEE.

There was widespread support for the idea of including SAP countries in the consultation process with regard to the EU Detailed Work Programme so that they can be kept up-to-date on the overall progress and be able to keep pace with reforms.

Participants agreed on instruments with which the Initiative could develop into a successful interface between national and European education developments such as regular meetings in order to exchange experiences in key areas of education reform; peer review support; capacity building measures in targeted areas; establishment of a database of good practice in the region; strengthening the dissemination of information through existing networks (e.g. SEE-ECN).

Based on the overall discussions format and content of a Memorandum of Understanding, expected to be signed by SEE Education Ministers, were further elaborated.

- **Second Working Meeting of the Senior Officials from South Eastern Europe** - Predeal, May 29 - 31, 2003

The meeting took place in Predeal, Romania. The detailed action plan of the ERI SEE, identifying 9 priority areas for educational reform, was endorsed and the Memorandum of Understanding of Ministers of SEE was finalised. The Senior Official furthermore compared examples of best practices in the region and discussed the Terms of References for a regional secretariat in SEE

- **The seventh conference of European Ministers of Education** - Nicosia, June 28, 2003

Ministers of Education of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, FYR Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro signed the Memorandum of Understanding at the EU Education Ministers Conference, on 28 June in Nicosia (Cyprus), in presence of the Greek EU-Presidency and the Stability Pact, demonstrating their commitment to the ERI SEE's reform agenda. It is expected that Albania, Croatia, Kosovo, Moldova and Romania will join this Memorandum in late 2003.

- **A start-up meeting of the OECD Project "Education Development for Disabled and at Risk Students"** - Vienna, September 25-28, 2003

The OECD Project was introduced first at the Second Meeting of the Senior Officials from South Eastern Europe held in Predeal in May 2003 and will be carried out with financial support by Norway, World Bank and Flemish Community. The project duration is expected to be three years covering the priority area of access to quality education as one of the priority area of ERI SEE.

The purpose of the meeting was to inform experts from SEE countries about the project, which will be initiated in SEE and to give them the opportunity to present the situation in their countries with regard to disabled and at risk students. This meeting provided the opportunity to discuss further steps for developing policies as well as to gather statistics and indicators and set up a data base.

## **B. "STRATEGY 2001" - PROMOTING EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES IN SEE COUNTRIES AT NATIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS**

The so-called "Strategy 2001", reflects the TF's overall focus on mid- and long-term system development at national and regional level. It plays an important role in promoting an inclusive consultation process among key actors in education on reform priorities and the identification of ways for funding their implementation. 10 comprehensive analyses of the status of education systems in SEE (OECD Thematic Reviews) highlighting reform priorities and regional recommendations have been carried out. Launching events in Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro and Kosovo organised in 2002 provided platforms for a wide range of stakeholders to discuss educational development priorities. The participation of experts from other SEE countries strengthened the regional exchange of experience on the policy level. The Task Force continues its efforts to support the organisation of further launching events in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, FYRoM, Moldova and Romania. The consultation process with FYRoM and Moldova is in progress.

- **South Eastern European Educational Co-operation Network (SEE-ECN)**

The Task Force managed to ensure further financial support for the SEE Educational Co-operation Network as the information backbone of the "Strategy 2001". It will continue to provide a virtual library of documents and other information for key actors in education, both on national, regional and European level.

- **Regional capacity building seminar** – Belgrade, March 17 - 19, 2003

Within the framework of this project a regional capacity building seminar for school inspectors from SEE was held in Belgrade with the financial support of the TFEY and the Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation. The seminar provided a profound insight into the various patterns of functions of inspectors of education in European countries and it deepened the knowledge of participants about various aspects of "whole school evaluation" of primary and secondary schools and regional boards. It furthermore showed very strong link between the political, systemic and managerial characteristic of a certain national educational system and elaborated concept "from inspection toward assessment". The seminar investigated possibilities to use the presented elements, methodology in situations in South Eastern European countries.

- **Donor Information Meeting – Montenegro** – Brussel, April 16, 2003

In co-operation between the Ministry of Education and Science of Montenegro, OSI and UNDP a donor information meeting was held in Brussels on April 16, 2003 with 50 participants. It served as an opportunity to present the education reform priorities of the Montenegrin Education Ministry and to prepare for the envisaged donors' conference in November 2003.

### **C. SECOND ROUND – PRIORITY PROJECTS**

The Task Force was in constant contacts with respective donors in an effort to ensure financial support for 27 projects within the second call of priority projects in three key areas (Education for Democratic Citizenship, Young People, History and History Teaching) launched at the beginning of 2002. End of March the TF finished its donor coordination and fundraising efforts. Eleven projects have received support and a number of them were able to start implementation. Around 50 percent of the overall amount requested within the SP have been raised. Some of the projects unfortunately did not receive sufficient donor's interest.

### **D. STREAMLINING THE ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE TFEY**

The Working Group Coordinators met in January 2003, in Vienna to discuss the current developments within the Stability Pact and their impact on the TF's future priorities and structure. They stressed the need to adjust the structure of the Task Force to its new priority the ERI SEE and to the recent streamlining process within the SP.

Stressing the value of the existing networks in the respective thematic fields for the new Initiative, it was recommended to maintain a platform for this expertise and the inter-institutional co-operation on the expert level. A new structure based on the WG Policy Development and System Improvement – "Consultative Body" – will be defined in accordance with the further developments and needs of the ERI SEE.

## **E. MEETING OF THE TASK FORCE – Belgrade, June 16, 2003**

More than 20 representatives of SEE Ministries of Education, international organisations and donor countries took part in the regular meeting of the Task Force Education and Youth held in Belgrade.

The aim of the meeting was to discuss the future structure and working mechanisms of the Task Force in view of recent developments within the Stability Pact and to present the results of the second Working Meeting of Senior Officials from SEE held in Romania from 29 to 31 May, 2003 and discuss future priorities of the Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE).

The participants agreed upon the new structure of the TFEY as agreed by the Working Group Coordinators and in accordance with future priorities of the Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe - ERI SEE (please see previous section "D").

## **3. ENVISAGED ACTIVITIES**

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The TFEY plans the following activities for the second half of 2003 and the first half of 2004 contributing to the two main strategic objectives mentioned before:

### **A. EDUCATION REFORM INITIATIVE OF SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE**

#### **- *Establishment of regional secretariat of the ERI SEE***

Supporting the idea of regional ownership, the overall co-ordination of the ERI SEE will be transferred to the region through establishment of a regional secretariat. Conditional to donor interest concerning the financing of such a secretariat and interest by a country in the region, it could be established by the end of 2004. The respective selection procedure is based on a transparent tender procedure launched amongst the members of the Task Force Education and Youth/Enhanced Graz Process in October 2003. Respective Terms of References will be posted on the SEE-ECN Homepage ([www.see-educoop.net](http://www.see-educoop.net)) end of October 2003.

#### **- *Expert Seminars on Teacher Training and ICT – Graz, November 2003***

The aim of the seminar is to bring experts from European Union and South Eastern Europe together to give SEE experts the opportunity to learn more about the EU current and future priorities, compare development trends in the EU with their respective national priorities and discuss the relevance/impact of joint EU standards on national education developments, look at the most important educational reform trends within the EU and discuss their relevance to SEE countries.

The experts from SEE will review their national education policies, compare them with evolving EU aims and will be able to feed results of the discussion into the policy development process in their respective countries and where necessary reorient their strategy and methodology.

These seminars could help close the growing gap between the EU and South Eastern Europe concerning the pace education development and a common understanding of reforms and in this way accelerate the process of getting closer to EU standards in education.

- ***Third Working Meeting of the Senior Officials from South Eastern Europe*** - Belgrade 4-7 December 2003

Participants will discuss the latest developments regarding the latest developments within the EU “Detailed Work Programme on the follow-up of the objectives of education and training systems in Europe” (intermediate Report to be published in November 2003 by the European Commission) and the Bologna Process. This meeting will serve as a high-level forum to identify interested SEE countries to host the secretariat based on the Terms of References for the ERI SEE. In addition to this, the participants will develop a work profile, identify legal and financial requirements for the secretariat and to develop lobbying strategies for donor support.

## **B. STRATEGY 2001**

- Regional capacity building seminar on decentralisation (Romania, 21-23 November 2003)  
This seminar will provide an overview of decentralisation in various countries, allowing a practice and solution-oriented discussion in order to develop tailor-made strategies for implementation of education reforms. In support of regional ownership the seminar will be organised by the Romanian country node presented through the Institute for Educational Sciences.
- OECD Thematic Review launching conferences  
in Romania (spring 2004), FYRoM (spring 2004), Moldova (spring 2004), Albania (tbc), Bosnia and Herzegovina (tbc), Bulgaria (tbc)

## **C. MEETING OF THE CONSULTATIVE BODY**

This new body is a board with advisory character and will meet twice a year on the occasion of the working meetings of Senior Officials from South Eastern Europe. It will include representatives of the (former) Task Force Working Groups: Council of Europe, OECD, European University Association (EUA) and the European Training Foundation, the European Commission, donor countries and institutions contributing to the ERI SEE and additional education experts. The Consultative Body will provide support and expertise in preparing the annual programme of the initiative on basis of the decisions of the Governing Board.

## **D. MOBILITY PROGRAMMES**

Continued support for SEE Education Ministries with regard to the opening of Community Programmes to SAP countries as outlined in the Thessaloniki Agenda for the Western Balkan Countries.