

ERI SEE Newsletter No. 1 (January – June 2005)

The Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE) is a regional platform for co-operation in the education area. It is intended to serve as an interface between ongoing national reforms in South Eastern Europe and current trends and developments in the education sector at EU level. Through fostering regional co-operation and facilitating capacity building and know-how transfer, ERI SEE promotes common European standards in education, also in the light of the ongoing EU integration process of the region.

ERI SEE Working Programme for 2005

At its first meeting in Zagreb the Governing Board of ERI SEE agreed upon the 2005 Work Programme.

Support for its implementation has been provided by the Austrian Development Agency, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports of Croatia, Bureau CROSS - The Netherlands, the Norwegian Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Education and Research - Romania and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

The objectives envisaged for 2005 focus on capacity building measures in key areas of educational reform with a special focus on ongoing and future EU integration processes and with respect to the shared goals and objectives of "Education and Training 2010":

- **Preparation for participation** in the Community Integrated Lifelong Learning Programme through capacity building measures. Western Balkan countries are envisaged to be eligible to the new ILLP from 2007 on. (For more information see: http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/index_en.htm)
- **Collecting and disseminating** relevant documents on education reforms in SEE
- **Increasing the visibility of activities** developed within the framework of ERI SEE

Background

In December 2002, in the context of transferring the ownership for regional co-operation to South Eastern Europe, the Task Force Education and Youth (TFEY) of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe has launched the **Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE)**.

Based on **Memorandum of Understanding** signed by all Ministers of Education and Higher Education in South Eastern Europe, it was established in June 2004. Since January 2005 ERI SEE implements an ambitious Work Plan for

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2005 based on decisions taken by representatives of the signatory Ministries. (more information at: http://www.see-educoop.net/graz_2003/activities/erisee/frame_erisee.htm)

The Secretariat of ERI SEE is responsible for the implementation of the annual programs adopted by the Governing Board within the overall objective of integrating the SEE countries into the evolving Wider European Area of Education through networking, organisation and delivery of seminars, training, workshops etc.

The Governing Board of ERI SEE consists of representatives from Ministries of Education from South Eastern Europe. A list of GB members can be found at: http://www.see-educoop.net/graz_2003/activities/erisee/frame_erisee.htm)

At its constitutive meeting in Zagreb in November 2004 it nominated Ms. Luminita Matei from Romania as executive director of the Secretariat. Ms. Matei (luminita.matei@erisee.org) is responsible for the implementation of the work programme and the overall

- **Enhancing cooperation** in the field of education and training with the support of international organizations

In this respect in 2005 the Secretariat is organizing a series of thematic seminars and conferences with a focus on:

- Integrated Lifelong Learning Community Programme
- Higher education and implementation of the Bologna Process
- Investing efficiently in education

In addition, throughout 2005 ERI SEE will offer a framework for implementing a number of core projects by international partner organizations, such as the "Dissemination of the Copenhagen Process" project of the ETF and the continuing OECD project on "Education Development for Disabled and at Risk Students".

What Does the Future Look Like?

Six years after the initiation of the Graz Process it was time to reflect on the current challenges and future perspectives of education development in the region.

The international conference "**Governance and Education for Sustainable Development and European Integration**" organized by the TFEY and held in Graz on January 28-29 2005 was designed to offer a wide platform for discussion between SEE, international organizations and EU educational and training institutions. Apart from evaluating the work of the TFEY in the past six years, the conference was an excellent opportunity to review education in a wider context, namely in terms of the role of governance in education for economic development, social cohesion, innovation, culture and diversity.

The participants - decision makers from the Ministries of Education, Finance, Economy, European Integration, Labour and Social Affairs from South Eastern Europe, parliamentarians from the region and the European Parliament involved in education issues, representatives from European institutions and international organizations - have focused their discussions on educational co-operation and reforms in the course of social, economic and political developments in SEE in

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operative management of ERI SEE.

The Consultative Body of

ERI SEE consists of representatives of international organisations and of donor countries/institutions which will provide support and expertise to the Governing Board. Currently its members are the Bureau Cross/The Netherlands, Council of Europe, European Commission, European University Association, European Training Foundation, KulturKontakt Austria, OECD, Norway, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and the Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe.

A list of CB members can be found at: http://www.see-educoop.net/graz_2003/activities/erisee/frame_erisee.htm

view both the EU integration of the region and the strategies for achieving the Lisbon goals at European level.

In her keynote speech at the Conference the Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, **Ms. Benita Ferrero-Waldner**, stated that *"Education reform is ... not just important for political and economic development. Even more fundamentally, it is an integral part of the modernization of the societies of South Eastern Europe. ... The Graz Process and its efforts to place education reforms into a larger political and economic framework is important to advance Europe's common goal of competitiveness, innovation and good education."*



Ms. Benita Ferrero-Waldner

The final report of the Graz Conference stresses the importance of **"enhanced cooperation and better coordination at all decision making levels, advocating with "a solid common voice" for education contribution to the modernization of our societies... Initiatives such as ERI SEE clearly indicate the growing willingness to cooperate in this respect on both the regional and European levels."**

The recommendations from Graz reinforce the importance of the ERI SEE mission for supporting education reform efforts through regional cooperation and information exchange at both regional and European levels. This determines the need for quick, effective and feasible steps towards fulfilling the overall objectives of ERI SEE, also through a series of capacity building measures for the region. (www.see-educoop.net/graz_conference2005)

What do We Plan for the Next Months?

On May 6-8 2005 the Secretariat organises in cooperation with the **Romanian Agency for Community programmes in the field of education and training** a workshop on Community programmes. Ministries of Education in the Western Balkan Countries and Moldova are invited to nominate participants. In the region there is a huge wealth of experience from the candidate countries- in particular Bulgaria and Romania which already participate in the current Community programmes in the field of education and training. The knowledge transfer capacity of these countries has been taken into account when planning the workshop. It will also be complemented by experiences made in the EU Member States.

What do we intend to do in Bucharest?

- To present the Community programmes in the field of education and training, respectively Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci and the administrative and financial requirements for participation.
- To disseminate the best results, experiences and practices, to discuss the relevance of participating in the Community programmes and to reflect on how to develop national capacities for managing the newly integrated Community programme.
- To discuss possible support to the Ministries of Education in the Western Balkan countries in the preparation process for the envisaged Community Integrated Lifelong Learning Programs starting in 2007.

On May 27-28 2005, ERI SEE has scheduled its regular Senior Officials and Governing Board meetings upon invitation of the Ministry of Education and Science of Montenegro. There are a series of topics that will be discussed during these meetings such as: update on the implementation of the OECD project on "*Education Development for Disabled and at Risk Students*", ETF project on "*Dissemination of Copenhagen Process*," EU presidency objectives and activities, current debates at European level, directions for 2006 within ERI SEE.

In June 2005 a seminar on higher education, following the Bergen conference withing the Bologna framework, will be organized jointly with the European University Association. Participants coming from the Ministries of Education and Higher Education and universities from the region together with international experts will debate on the challenges facing the implementation of the objectives set by the Ministers of Education in the context of the Bologna Process.

You can find additional information about ERI SEE and our projects on the web site:
<http://www.erisee.org>