



Dear friends,

The future of regional co-operation in South East Europe is being written in Zagreb in these very days. The Regional Table of the Stability Pact, meeting on 10 May back-to-back with SEECP Foreign Ministers and

Heads of government, will endorse the appointment of the Secretary General of the Regional Co-operation Council (RCC) and the decision on the seat of the RCC Secretariat. Regional co-operation in SEE is vital in order to tackle effectively some of the most problematic issues in each individual country, and is a pre-requisite for further Euro-Atlantic integration.

At this time, when we are about to make a key step towards the future, I think it's wise to carefully retain and appraise the lessons learnt so far, and particularly those inspired by the unique experience of the Stability Pact. The legacy of the Stability Pact as a forum for close co-operation between SEE and the international community constitutes the foundation of the future, successful work of the RCC.

But while the Stability Pact was initiated and mainly led by the international community, it's now time for the region to take the lead in regional co-operation, and to finally look ahead, towards the achievement of our common goals of lasting peace and a prosperous and secure future for all the region, leaving behind and finally overcoming a turbulent and painful past of conflicts and divisions. Let's work together to make the decisions of today the basis of successful regional co-operation tomorrow.

Erhard Busek, Special Co-ordinator of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe

At the SEECP meeting of the Speakers of the Parliament, held in Zagreb on 15-17 April 2007, participants endorsed the selection of Bulgaria as the Parliamentary Co-operation Focal Point in an Important Move towards Regional Ownership. The PC Focal Point aims at intensifying regional parliamentary co-operation, ensuring co-ordination and fostering political support for regional activities. It will provide an information network between and for the different Parliaments and help to establish and consolidate networks between sector- specific Parliamentary Committees. As requested by the region, Parliamentary Co-operation will be an overarching priority of the Stability Pact successor, the Regional Co-operation Council (RCC).

The future of Regional Co-operation to be written in Zagreb

The transformation of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe into a regionally owned Regional Co-operation Council (RCC) is entering its final and decisive phase, with the designation of the seat of the Secretariat General to be endorsed by the Regional Table in Zagreb on 10 May-and confirmed by SEECP meetings.



These decisions need to be implemented over the next few months, prior to the formal handover of the Stability Pact to the Regional Co-operation Council, which will take place in February 2008.

The implementation phase consists of two main components. On the one hand there's the actual setting up of the Regional Co-operation Council, around the figure of the first Secretary General and starting with the establishment of a fully operational Secretariat. This process will be guided by the Statute of the RCC, which has been elaborated and approved by an Institutional Working Group bringing together SEE countries, Stability Pact and the international community, and provides a complete overview of the RCC structures, priorities, tasks and working mechanisms.

The second component of the implementation phase is the streamlining of all task forces and initiatives currently operating under the framework of the Stability Pact, in order to provide the RCC with a coherent and self-sustainable set of co-operation processes. An update on progress in the streamlining process will also be presented at the Regional Table in Zagreb.

Beside the focus on transition, the SP continues to work on substance under all of its three Working Tables. The most important recent events and the main achievements are listed in this newsletter. Contrary to the past, the Working Tables won't meet side by side with the Regional Table. A final meeting of the Working Tables is planned for late autumn 2007.

Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) 2006:

Parliamentarians from each of the eight CEFTA parties (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia and UNMIK/Kosovo) gathered in Brussels on 19 and 20 April for a seminar on this new, ambitious and inclusive trade agreement. The seminar, which was jointly organised by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) and the Stability Pact office, aimed at providing parliamentarians with an overview of CEFTA in the context of the EU accession process, the multilateral trading system and the overall business climate in South Eastern Europe. It also provided an opportunity for parliamentarians to gain a better understanding of the obligations assumed under the agreement. Speakers included representatives from DG Enlargement, DG Trade and the OECD as well as senior trade experts who have worked with the Stability Pact's Trade Working Group on the CEFTA negotiations. To date, three parties – Albania, Montenegro and UNMIK/Kosovo have ratified the agreement, which is expected to come into force in mid 2007. Further information can be found on <http://www.stabilitypact.org/trade/>

WORKING TABLE III: DPPI - Slovenia has been elected as the new Chair-in-Office of the Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative (DPPI) for 2007.

WORKING TABLE I: The web portal on Postgraduate Scholarships and Grant Opportunities for SEE in Social Sciences was created in February 2007 under the Stability Pact's core objective of Fostering and Building Human Capital. This initiative offers information about scholarships and grants in EU Member States and beyond that are open to students from SEE. In the first two months since it was launched the database has had excellent visibility and is steadily expanding its potential, with a very good resonance in the region. The database is linked to and co-ordinated with the European Researcher's Mobility Portal of the EC, allowing both services to reach a wider audience. The long term objective of the initiative is to transfer this pilot project into a regionally-owned, constantly updated information service.

WORKING TABLE III: At the request of regional and international stakeholders, a Working Group on the status of the Regional Arms Control Verification and Assistance Implementation Centre (RACVIAC) was created in October 2006. Two meetings were organised and chaired by Croatian Assistant Minister Pjer Simunovic, where participants agreed that the future mission of RACVIAC should be to foster dialogue and co-operation on security threats facing South Eastern Europe through a partnership between the countries of the region and their international partners, NATO and the EU in particular. RACVIAC needs to address a wide range of politico-military issues, with a view to enhancing regional stability, civil-military relations, and the democratic control of armed forces. RACVIAC should therefore become a truly regionally owned centre of expertise and practical co-operation. It will need to strengthen its financial basis and personnel capacities. As security co-operation will be a priority of the Regional Co-operation Council (RCC), RACVIAC will seek to define its exact link to the RCC by June.

Upcoming Events



Venue: International Expocentre
More at <http://www.stabilitypact.org/rt>

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WORKING TABLE II: The next Regional Ministerial Conference on the Information Society will take place in Sarajevo on 21 and 22 June. It will provide a platform for the signing of the eSEE Agenda Plus and Broadband Action Plan, the new strategic documents for Information Society development in South Eastern Europe. The conference will also place special emphasis on exploring possibilities for creating partnerships with the private sector. The Ministers will endorse a Memorandum of Understanding on the creation of an e-Governance Centre in SEE which will seek to provide the participating countries of SEE with a single regional institution for the co-ordination and transfer of knowledge concerning e-governance, e-commerce and development of modern public administration and democracy.

SEE countries agree to upgrade regional co-operation in the fight against corruption



On the fringes of the SEECJ JHA Ministers on 13 April 2007, in Zagreb, SEE countries signed a **Memorandum of Understanding**, by which they commit to fund the **Secretariat of the Anti-corruption Initiative (SPAI-RSLO)** based in Sarajevo. The MoU will consolidate the capacity of the SPAI-RSLO to serve as a focal point for regional anti-corruption co-operation through the facilitation of best practices and the dissemination of lessons learnt.

WORKING TABLE II: The 3rd Ministerial meeting of the Danube Co-operation Process (DCP) was hosted by the Government of Serbia in Belgrade on 19 April. During the meeting, the Stability Pact's proposal to "enhance co-ordination and effectiveness" of the various elements of the DCP was warmly welcomed and formally endorsed in the Final Declaration. Participants charged senior officials from all participating states and organisations to meet as soon as possible to agree on how best to enhance co-ordination across the six dimensions of the DCP – economy, navigation, environment, tourism, culture and sub-regional co-operation. Given the complexity of many of these dimensions as well as the large number of public and private organisations involved in the process, it is vital that the various activities are well co-ordinated if they are to be effective. Participants have agreed that no new structures or organisations will be established, rather existing DCP institutions will take on an enhanced role. Participants also agreed to seek improvement in the co-operation between the DCP and the Black Sea Economic Co-operation (BSEC).

WORKING TABLE III: Police Forum - The 4th Conference of the Bled Process on Stolen Vehicle Crime took place in late March 2007 and agreed to implement national plans aimed at fighting stolen vehicle crime, to create a twinning system with the support of the EC and Europol, and to establish a peer review system to be initiated by the South East Europe Police Chiefs Association (SEPCA). The Bucharest SECI Center, with the support of the Stability Pact Initiative against Organised Crime (SPOC), agreed to focus on improving legislative developments to increase the regional effort in fighting stolen vehicle crime. In early March 2007 the National Directors of Police agreed on a new legal basis for SEPCA, in order to strengthen it and take a stronger role in regional police co-operation and public security.

WORKING TABLE I: The Stability Pact continues to support the promotion, translation and publishing of the Joint History Workbooks of the Centre for Democracy and reconciliation in South East Europe. Following the English, Serbian and Greek version of the Workbooks, the Albanian version is due to be ready by mid 2007. SP will continue to support the producing of different language versions of the books covering other SEE states. On 3 May 2007 in Brussels, in co-operation with the European Policy Center, the SP organised a policy dialogue "Teaching History: the path towards reconciliation in SEE". Other events dedicated to awareness raising about the need to reform the way history is taught in SEE are to be held in the region in summer and autumn of 2007.