



STABILITY PACT

FOR SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE



Working Table I: Democracy

Concept Paper for a new Core Objective

Fostering and Building Human Capital





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Dear friends,

Despite recent developments, the statistics related to education and research in South Eastern Europe still make a heartbreaking reading:

- More than 50% of schools in the region have no adequate water supply, more than 25% have no adequate sewage, 56% have no telephone line and nearly 25% have problems with heating;
- The lowest levels of school attendance are amongst children (mainly female) in rural areas, Roma population and children of displaced people and refugees;
- In Montenegro, where there is a high level of secondary and higher education participation, 96% of 14-18 year olds in refugee populations are without secondary education;
- In Serbia, real expenditures for education were declining parallel to real GD with expenditures for secondary school education declining even by 57% in the period 1990-1999;
- In Kosovo, it is estimated that only 73% of children enrolled in the first grade of compulsory education will complete it and that only a further 45% of those going on to secondary education will complete their studies;
- The under-funding and the wars in SEE have seriously weakened the school infrastructure and this is most visible in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where 70% of the educational infrastructure was destroyed during the war
- The regular attendance level in both primary and secondary schools in Albania is only 43%....

This statistics only demonstrate the scope and scale of the problems in South Eastern Europe - while it is not meant to single out particular countries or territories in the region, the statistics illustrate how serious the problem of sustainable education and research is in the region.

As a result, investment in education, training systems and research, which normally play an essential role in the overall economic and political development of a country, has so far been halted or delayed because of the challenges faced due to conflict, changing governments and the unwillingness to co-operate regionally. The impact of the abovementioned is far reaching. The lack of employment opportunities affects everyone in the region, but results specifically in the most educated leaving the country, which compounds the problem of brain drain in the region.

While the 7th Framework Programme ... the area of research provides an excellent opportunity for SEE countries to be part of a wider European Research Area, it does not make allowance for the restrictions faced by the countries of the region that cannot fully take advantage of this opportunity due to the financial contributions they must make in order to participate.

Therefore the Stability Pact proposes that we focus one of the priority areas of Working Table I, which deals with questions of democratisation, on how to foster and build human capital in South Eastern Europe, this enormous potential that lies in human beings and their skills. We cannot talk about economic and political security in the region if we neglect to address the daily problems that people living in the region face on a daily basis.

We will continue to help the countries of the region in mobilising their potential partners in and out of the region. But it is up to the region itself to move this topic higher on the priority agenda if they would like to be "fit for Europe".

Education makes a people easy to lead, but difficult to drive;
easy to govern, but impossible to enslave
[William Blake]

1. RATIONALE

The 9th Conference of European Ministers of Education entitled “Strengthening Education in Europe”, held in Vienna on 17 March 2006, stated in its Final Communiqué: “The process of integrating the region [South Eastern Europe] into the European Area of Education is well underway, but requires sustainable support and commitment at national, regional and European Union levels...The implementation of the Bologna objectives, the participation of higher education institutions in the new Community programmes, and the integration into the European Research Area are vital for the higher education institutions of the Western Balkan region and, with this, for strengthening education in Europe.” Recognising that **Fostering and Building Human Capital is crucial for the overall stabilisation and prosperity of the South Eastern Europe region, and bearing in mind the Stability Pact’s unique role in the region and its mandate on regional co-operation**, we will complement the activities of the European Union, European Union Member States and the Stability Pact partners in addressing the education and research reforms from a regional perspective. This will be done in close co-operation with the Task Force on Education and Youth.

The state of education in the countries of South East Europe is improving, but remains fragile. Lack of immediate comprehensive action favouring the reform processes currently underway in the countries of SEE jeopardizes the overall education and research efforts. A decade of wars, combined with international isolation, has led to the deterioration of a relatively stable and comparatively well-advanced education system of the ex-Yugoslav states. In other SEE states, directly unaffected by war, the legacy of a communist totalitarian past, combined with slow economic development, have contributed to the slow progress in education reforms, resulting in education dropping from the priority list for many SEE governments. Hence, the investment in education in the South Eastern Europe was very low.

In recent years the region has shown signs of improvement and the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe will co-operate with the governments of South Eastern Europe and the Stability Pact partners in order to use this positive momentum and even further intensify the education and research reform processes within the region. The Stability Pact, therefore, greatly welcomes the activities of the Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE), which is the only recognised regional platform for communication between the donor community and the region in this field. Moreover, the Stability Pact commends the commitment of education ministers in SEE to education reforms in line with EU developments.

South Eastern Europe has not been offering a stable environment for the professional development of individuals, many of them, successful in their field of expertise. This undoubtedly has a negative impact on the overall reform of South Eastern European states and societies.

More than ever before, the need to support the development of human capital in the countries of South Eastern Europe is of key importance. In order **for the stabilisation and reform process to be a success and sustainable in the long run, it is as necessary to reform the field of education as it is to reform the economies**. It is of utmost importance to strengthen the institutional capacity of the educational and research systems and support the creation and strengthening of centres of excellence within SEE.

We must work on making Fostering and Building of Human Capital a top priority, both in South Eastern European countries and in the European Union policies vis-à-vis the region. Furthermore, **in order to follow the new policy orientation of the European Union, fostering existing and building new human capital should be singled out as a top priority in the reform process of all South Eastern European countries.** Without this it would be difficult to achieve employment generation, flexibility of the labour force and social cohesion in SEE. If there is a lack of coherent and available education and research programmes, democratic progress can be seriously hampered with long-lasting stability in the region being very difficult.

The Stability Pact welcomes the clearly visible European commitment and dimension of education reforms in the Western Balkan countries. Nevertheless, **it is essential that there be a focused national commitment to reforms,** especially with respect to greater investment **in education and research** (i.e. budget for the European programmes in education and research). Therefore, fostering and building of human capital is indispensable for integrating South Eastern Europe in the evolving European Area of Education and for strengthening the positive economic and social development in the region in light of their perspective EU membership.

This concept paper recognises the essential role that the education systems play in the process of fostering and building societies. It is for this reason that the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe wishes to promote Fostering and Building Human Capital as the new core objective.



2. OBJECTIVES

The core objective **Fostering and Building Human Capital** will incorporate both education and research in order to tackle the specific challenges faced in the reform process of both. Moreover, it intends to **actively promote regional co-operation** in order to foster the development of a learning society, democratic and accessible to all. Such a society is a prerequisite for the political, economic and social development and for the integration of the countries of the region into the Euro Atlantic mainstream. Growth and development of the labour market is directly related to **the development of education, research and innovation, which is interlinked with the development of the region's economy and social capital.**

The Stability Pact's unique position in the region means that it can act as a bridge between the donor community, the European Commission, regional education ministries, research ministries and civil society actors active in this field. The Stability Pact can and does play a co-ordinating role between the donors and regional actors. **In light of the future EU membership of SEE countries**, stated clearly in both the Thessaloniki European Council Conclusions in 2003 and the 2006 European Commission's Communication "The Western Balkans on the road to the EU: consolidating stability and raising prosperity", **the Stability Pact wishes to raise awareness about the importance of granting all SEE countries a special position (not merely 'third country status') in both the European Commission's education and research programmes.**



Education

- **The Stability Pact will support** SEE countries, European Commission and European Union Member States **in strengthening participation** of the countries of Western Balkans **in the new integrated Lifelong Learning programme;**
- Encourage the countries from SEE to continue their **education and vocational training reforms in line with the Bologna process**, Copenhagen and Barcelona objectives, etc.;
- Encourage the countries of SEE to **invest resourcefully in education;**
- **Raise awareness** with the Stability Pact partners and the national governments in the region of the utmost need to concentrate on the area of **building human capital;**
- **Strengthening the link between the civil society and education** (especially in areas such as reconciliation, history teaching etc);
- Support the **establishment of links between the public and private sectors in education** in order to enhance the goal-oriented quality of education programmes;
- Encourage and support all **education and research programmes that highlight the diversity of South Eastern Europe;**

- Encourage all initiatives that **support mobility between Western Balkans** on one hand and the EU and the world on the other. In order **to stimulate labour mobility and mobility of students and researchers**, the SP will urge its partners to open up their education and research area support funds for South Eastern Europe;
- Give any additional **support to Migration, Asylum and Refugee Return Initiative and Working Table III** in their efforts to promote an open discussion on visa facilitation for students, researchers and academic staff.

Research

- Support the European Union Member States and other Stability Pact partners' plans to continue strengthening their actions in favour of the **development of the Western Balkans research community under the 7th Framework Programme (2007-2013);**
- Encourage the European Commission's plan to support the building of capacities of **Centres of Excellence in the region;**
- Support the conclusions and recommendations adopted by participants of the conference on "Strengthening Higher Education and Research in South Eastern Europe", held in Vienna on 3 March 2006, that concluded: "In view of the success of the SEE-ERA.NET (the European network for integration of the Western Balkan countries into the European Research Area) project in establishing a sustainable network of institutions from the EU Member States, Accession and Pre-Accession countries, partners are encouraged to support a **new research co-operation support scheme with and within the region** as a follow-up initiative."



3. WORK PLAN

Following extensive consultations with the Stability Pact partners and South Eastern European countries, the Stability Pact has made a list of specific actions that are best suited for achieving greater inclusion of South Eastern Europe into the European Union research and education area and its programmes. The list of priorities/actions to be undertaken by the Stability Pact can be divided into three groups: Education, Research and Common priorities.

3.1. Education:

- Support the **mobility and university exchanges** already in place, including exchange of administrators and supervisors in education.
- Advocate within **the South Eastern European states to set education and vocational training as a national priority**, in order to benefit from the extra funding available for education through CARDS, PHARE and IPA programmes.
- The Stability Pact will, through its Task Force on Education and Youth, ERI SEE Secretariat and their partners, **support the governments in the region in their reforms of the higher education legislation** to integrate universities into one legal entity. This would accelerate the coherent implementation of the Bologna and European research agendas.
- The Stability Pact will continue to support, with the help of ERI SEE Secretariat, the preparations of the education institutions for their successful participation in the different actions under the EU's Integrated Community Programme for Lifelong Learning.
- **The Stability Pact supports the EU's objectives of the European Qualification Framework** and will encourage the region to make its education reforms bearing the European Qualification Framework in mind.
- ERI SEE Secretariat and the European University Association will co-operate in order to prepare the countries of SEE for their participation in the Lifelong Learning programme.
- **Through joint action with ERI SEE Secretariat, inform the region of the necessity to work on the European Qualification framework.**
- In co-operation with ERI SEE Secretariat, encourage the region and the relevant institutions in SEE to make the necessary **reforms in line with the Bologna process.**
- **Co-operate with the university networks of the region**, especially with the European University Association and the Central CEEPUS Office, Central European Initiative, and Central Eastern European University Network (CEEUN), World University Service (WUS), Institute for Central Eastern Europe and the Balkans of the Bologna University and the Centre for Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Studies of the University of Sarajevo, as well as with other post-graduate networks in the region, in improving the structures for mobility and exchanges of students.
- Offer a full **support to the reform efforts of the Novi Sad Initiative**. The Initiative sets out to address issues crucial to the implementation of the European Higher Education and Research Areas, among which an effective regional co-operation and institutional autonomy have been identified as being instrumental to reach this goal.
- **Support the existing reconciliation initiatives in the SEE region.**

- Within the framework of the overall reconciliation efforts in the SEE region, in addition to numerous activities of the Task Force on Education and Youth, **the Stability Pact will continue to promote the SEE History Workbooks Project** (led by the **Centre for Democracy and Reconciliation of SEE – CDRSEE**). In addition, co-ordinate actions aimed at finding available funds for the translation and printing of SEE History Workbooks.

3. 2. Research:

- Support the universities in the region in **strengthening their participation with research institutions and researchers of the EU Member States** within the 7th Framework Programme.
- Given the importance of improving capacity building and human resources development in the region, **the Stability Pact will strengthen the EU national contact points in the region.**
- **Support actions aimed at opening the 7th Framework Programme for the countries of the Western Balkans** through contacts with the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament and the European Commission.
- In addition, **support SEE ERA Net** in its lobbying efforts for the inclusion of **Research and Development into the CARDS** programme and its successor **Instrument for Pre-Accession** (concentrating on infrastructure development, capacity building, etc).
- Encourage the promotion of **synergies between the European RTD Framework and other international RTD instruments** available to South Eastern Europe region.
- Provide **support to the Western Balkans Steering Platform**, which was created within the framework of the Competitiveness Council and under the leadership of the Austrian government in May 2006.
- Support initiatives that intend to **update and extend the Thessaloniki Agenda Action Plan** and bring it up to date with the new realities and needs of South Eastern Europe.
- In co-operation with the SEE-ERA.Net work on defining the necessary standards for the evaluation of research projects and institutions that will be recognised and applicable to partner countries.
- Support the EU and EU Member States governments' efforts to set up **7th Framework Programme National Contact Points for all SEE countries** (based on the model of co-operation between Austria and Bosnia and Herzegovina).

▪ **3.3. Common priorities:**

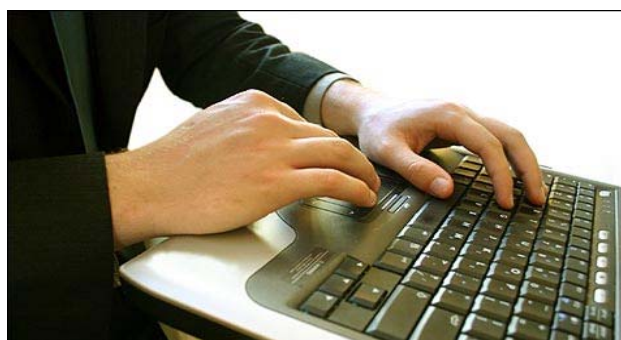
- Encourage **the full integration of South Eastern Europe into the European Education and Research Area.**
- Raise awareness within the Member States and the European Commission of the need to provide for the **sufficient share for education in Instrument for Pre-Accession for the countries of South Eastern Europe.**
- **Encourage Stability Pact donors** to open up their own national programmes for **SEE regional co-operation projects in the area of education and research.**
- **Enhance the support** of the Stability Pact partners, including the non-EU states, **to cover the prerequisite self-financing required of SEE countries to participate in EU programmes.**
- Advocate with the European Parliament to adopt the European Commission’s Proposal for the “Integrated Lifelong Learning Programme”. Moreover, include the Stability Pact leverage organisations, such as the European Policy Advisors, in this process.
- Continue to advocate the necessity of highlighting **regional co-operation in the Instrument for Pre-Accession structure.**
- **Co-ordinate** Stability Pact efforts **with the existing activities of the Council of Europe** in the field of education and research.

4. ACTIVITIES

Action
Transfer of Information Meetings -regarding the new generation of EU research and education programs (organising co-ordinated actions for advocacy aimed at expanding FP 7, Integrated Programme for Lifelong learning, including COMENIUS and other EU programmes to countries of SEE)
Partners
ERI SEE SEE missions in Brussels EU Commission DG Research and DG Education SEE ERA Net
Place
Brussels
Deadline
By the end of 2006

Action
Transfer of Information Meetings (aimed at officials of SEE ministries of education, as well as at the co-ordination with EU education programmes contact points in the region) -regarding the new generation of EU research and education programmes
Partners
ERI SEE SEE states education ministries European Commission national agencies and/or EU education and research contact points in SEE SEE ERA Net.
Place
SEE region
Deadline
By the end of 2006

Action
Transfer of Information Meetings (aimed at the wider public) - regarding the new generation of EU research and education programmes & setting up of data bases (in co-operation with e-SEE and/or ERI SEE)
Partners
ERI SEE European Commission SEE ERA Net
Place
SEE region
Deadline
By the end of 2006



Action
Handbook on EU education and research programmes specifically designed for South Eastern Europe
Partners
tbc. Find a donor partner
Place
N/A
Deadline
By the end of 2006

Action
Mapping document of regional Vocational Education and Training Centres
Partners
Working Table I and the European Training Foundation
Place
Working Table I
Deadline
By the end of 2006

Action
Recommendation paper for the development of vocational training in SEE
Partners
Working Table I and the European Training Foundation
Place
Working Table I
Deadline
By the end of 2006

Action
Trilateral University Co-operation between the universities of Korca, Kozani and Ohrid (Ohrid-Prespa region) – In co-operation with the LODE/CBC Task Force
Partners
East West Institute Governments of Greece, Albania and FYR of Macedonia, Universities of Korca, Kozani and Ohrid
Place
Signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministers of Education of Greece, FYROM and Albania)
Deadline
By the end of 2006

Action
SEE history Workbooks Project (translation, printing of the books in languages of SEE states). High priority is to secure the Albanian translation of the workbooks in the medium term (English and Serbian are already available)
Partners
Centre for Democracy and Reconciliation Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (tbc.) / European Commission (tbc.)
Place
N/A
Deadline
By the end of 2006

Action
Support the functioning of National SEE contact points for EU programmes in the field of education and research (support the functioning)
Partners
SEE governments / EU Commission / SEE ERA Net Western Balkan Countries Steering Platform
Place
SEE Region
Deadline
By the end of 2006



Launched in 1999, the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe is the first comprehensive conflict-prevention strategy of the international community, aimed at strengthening the efforts of the countries of South East Europe in fostering peace, democracy, respect for human rights and economic prosperity. The **Stability Pact** provides a framework to stimulate regional co-operation and expedite integration into European and trans-Atlantic structures. The Pact's secretariat, located in Brussels, is organised into three units - Working Table I deals with issues of **democratisation and human rights**, Working Table II with **economic reconstruction, cooperation and development** matters and Working Table III with **security issues**.

