



# STABILITY PACT FOR SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE

## Education and Youth Progress Report: January - June 2004

### REALISED ACTIVITIES

Task Force Education and Youth focused its activities during this reporting period on further development of the Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE) and especially on the establishment of the regional Secretariat of the ERI SEE. It has furthermore continued its efforts with regard to organizing international education conferences in Moldova and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in co-operation with OECD and the respective Ministries of Education.

#### *Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE)*

Based on the decisions taken during the 3rd Senior Officials Meeting held in Belgrade in December 2003, a group of Senior Officials met in January 2004 for a further joint drafting session on the Terms of References with regard to the aim, instruments, tasks and especially to the establishment of a Secretariat in the region. To that end,

the Task Force started the ERI SEE tender procedure for hosting a Secretariat in February by sending the revised TORs, the application form and the respective guidelines to all signatory ministries of the Memorandum of Understanding.

At the end of March 2004, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Montenegro submitted its official application for hosting the ERI SEE Secretariat, followed by a Task Force visit to Podgorica, where the Task Force reviewed the proposed sites and met with Ministry representatives.

During the 4th Senior Officials Meeting held in Zagreb from 21-22 May 2004, the Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports expressed once more its interest to also host the ERI SEE Secretariat, whereas it was decided that the Croatian Ministry of Education should have submitted its application in a written form by 28 May 2004 at the latest. The official election procedure will take place during the 8<sup>th</sup> Conference of European Ministers

of Education to take place in Oslo on 24-25 June 2004. It is foreseen, the Secretariat to be established in the region by the end of 2004.

Within the ERI SEE, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regional Expert Seminar on Life-long Learning (LLL) took place on 7-8 May 2004. The aim was to bring experts from EU and SEE together to discuss current trends and developments in the field of life-long learning with special reference to ongoing discussions on the European and international level. The experts furthermore prepared a joint position envisaged Oslo Ministerial Conference.

During the 4th Senior Officials Meeting, the ERI SEE work programme was discussed as well as the ongoing process within the EU Detailed Work Programme, the upcoming EU Ministers Conference in Oslo, as well as the seminar on Life-Long Learning held in Vienna on 7-8 May. The Task Force furthermore presented the envisaged international conference on education to be held in January 2005 in Graz, evaluating the last 5-6 years of educational policy and development in SEE as well as the work of the Enhanced Graz Process/Task Force Education and Youth.

In addition, following PISG Kosovo/UNMIK, which officially joined the Memorandum of Understanding of Ministers of Education of SEE in February, the Croatian Ministry of Research, Education and Sports signed the MoU on the occasion of the 3rd Informal Conference of Ministers of South-East Europe, on 25 April, in Istanbul. Upon the planned signature of the Romanian Ministry of Education and Research on the occasion of the 8<sup>th</sup> Conference of European Ministers of Education to take place in Oslo on 24-25 June 2004, all SEE education ministries will have signed the MoU.

### *“Strategy 2001”*

A two-day regional capacity building seminar on decentralization took place in Bucharest on 6-7 February 2004, providing an overview of decentralization in various countries, allowing a practice and solution-oriented discussion in order to develop tailor-made strategies for implementation of education reforms. In order to support regional ownership, the seminar was organized by the Romanian country node represented through the Institute for Educational Sciences. The latter is part of the South Eastern Educational Cooperation Network (SEE-ECN) ([www.see-educoop.net](http://www.see-educoop.net)) as the information backbone of the Task Force, providing virtual library and other information on education on national, regional and EU level.

Within the Strategy 2001, aimed at promoting education development process in SEE countries at national and regional levels, the Task Force was in intensive consultation process with the Moldovan Ministry of Education for the organisation of an international education conference in Chisinau. The Moldovan Ministry of Education, OECD, ETF and UNICEF agreed to jointly organize the conference on 14-15 June 2004, under the auspices of the Stability Pact/Task Force Education and Youth. This conference would

support the consultation process on education reform providing a wider discussion forum and strengthen national and international cooperation in the field of education reforms in Moldova. A similar education conference is envisaged in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia later this year.

## **EVALUATION**

The main characteristic of this reporting period is the further development of the ERI SEE in terms of fundraising, the establishment of the Secretariat as well as the implementation of the ERI SEE Action Plan.

An important achievement was the final definition of the roles and tasks of the secretariat, of its staff and the Governing Board. A general legal framework needed for an effective Secretariat has also been clearly identified by the Task Force.

In addition, the fact that all the Ministries will have signed the MoU by the end of June 2004 shows not only their interest but also their commitment and readiness to take over the responsibility of the adaptation of existing national legal frameworks of education reform in line with ongoing European developments and national reform priorities.

Several countries made pledges during the Stability Pact Regional Table in December 2003, and the Task Force continued its efforts in finalizing those commitments and turning them into concrete financial support. Norway, Italy and Switzerland officially announced their financial support during the 4<sup>th</sup> Senior Officials Meeting. In addition, the Task Force discussed the ways of co-operation with both the current Irish, as well as the upcoming Dutch EU Presidency, in terms of the financial support of the ERI SEE.

The Task Force has also managed to intensify the contacts with the European Commission, further supporting the linking of ongoing national education reforms in SEE with the current developments within EU and also giving an important signal to the SEE countries. The co-operation with EC took place in the framework of the ERI SEE seminar on life-long learning (Vienna, 7-8 May), being an important aspect of the Education and Training 2010 process within the EU. By basing the seminar on the Declaration on life-long learning signed by Ministers of Education from SEE in Skopje in October 2003 and linking it to the upcoming Conference of EU Education Ministers in Oslo, the Task Force successfully combined and channelled the efforts made by various actors.

Furthermore, the importance of the OECD international conference on the implementation of education reforms in Moldova, envisaged to take place on 14-15 June, is twofold: it will bring forward the discussion on educational development and support in Moldova, and will enable the country to enhance its position in a wider international framework. The Moldovan participation in the ERI SEE certainly strengthened the cooperation process and accelerated the consultation process with the Ministry.

## CHALLENGES AND FURTHER ACTIVITIES

*- Establish the organizational structure of ERI SEE – by October 2004*

The organizational structure of the ERI SEE will consist of the Governing Board, the Consultative Body and the Regional Secretariat. The latter is envisaged for 2004 to further promote and support the Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe.

The Governing Board will be composed of one representative of each MoU signatory ministry nominated by the respective Minister of Education and the Chair of the Task Force. The Consultative Body should include representatives of the (former) Task Force Working Groups, namely the Council of Europe, OECD, the European University Association (EUA) and the European Training Foundation, the European Commission, donor countries and institutions contributing to the ERI SEE and additional educational experts.

*- Establish ERI SEE Secretariat in the region, strengthening regional ownership*

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 by the end of 2004. The signatory ministries will decide on the location of the Secretariat on the occasion of the 8<sup>th</sup> Conference of European Ministers of Education to take place in Oslo on 24-25 June 2004.

*- Organize international education conference in January 2005*

An evaluation conference is planned at the outset of 2005, with aims both to review the role of education and educational co-operation in the social, economic and political development in SEE, and to provide comprehensive analysis of achievements and shortfalls of the Enhanced Graz Process/Task Force Education and Youth activities since 1999. This conference should furthermore provide recommendations on the future overall strategy and activities in regional cooperation on education and youth in SEE.