



*“A challenging task for the medium/long term for national and international decision-makers is to ensure that the benefits of economic progress reach the population at large” (CEB – Social Challenges in South Eastern Europe, June 2005)*

## **BACKGROUND & KEY CHALLENGES**

- Despite economic recovery and higher growth rates throughout the SEE region over the last few years, social disequilibria remain;
- Long-term unemployment, inadequate health care systems, poor social infrastructure and weak social dialogue are common features in the SEE countries;
- The most important challenge for the region is to promote sustainable growth while encouraging equitable social development.

## **ROLE & STRATEGY OF THE INITIATIVE**

- The ISC serves as platform where partners from the region and the international community can decide on priorities and regional actions in the social field;
- It advocates a complementary approach to social and economic issues, and seeks to assist countries in the harmonisation of their social policies with EU and international standards;
- To date, the main focus of the ISC has been on topics related to employment and labour, social dialogue and health.

## **ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE & THE WAY AHEAD**

- Securing firm political commitment by the SEE countries and international partners to jointly address social policy issues (e.g. Skopje Pledge on Health; Sofia Conclusions on Employment);
- Creation of several networks of regional experts (e.g. SEE Health Network, the Permanent High Level Committee on Employment etc.);
- Implementation of a dozen regional projects on upgrading employment policy, improving public health legislation and systems, and strengthening social dialogue;
- The ISC will seek to implement an enhanced regional ownership strategy, aimed at ensuring long-term sustainability of its results.

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