



CORE OBJECTIVES FOR 2006

Parliamentary Cooperation

Following the regional ownership discussion introduced at the Working Table I meeting in Sofia, SEE Parliamentarians have expressed their needs and priorities on Parliamentary Cooperation. Further to their requests, the SP programmes will promote the harmonization of legislation with EU standards, strengthening and institutionalising the links between Committees of different Parliaments dealing with similar issues, channelling efforts towards the training and capacity-building of Parliamentarians and Parliamentary staff, further supporting regional parliamentary co-operation structures originating from the SEE countries.

- Developing a common strategy/representation of SEE Parliaments with a special focus on the EU integration process (e.g. through the strengthening of the newly established Conference of the Committee on European Integration of the Western Balkans Parliaments);
- Supporting regional parliamentary networking structures to become more operational and institutionalised (e.g. the Cetinje Parliamentary Forum);
- Strengthening the professional capacity of parliamentarians and parliamentary staff, especially in Parliamentary oversight on government implementation of legislation and in parliamentary budgeting process;
- In collaboration with the Parliamentary Troika, organise a series of meetings concentrating on the empowerment of national Parliaments in the region and their parliamentary committees dealing with: EU integration, parliamentary control of the security and defence sector, energy sector reform, reform of the judiciary branch and parliamentary control of budgetary expenditure (including exchange of experiences in the field of creation of the institution of auditor general).
- Continuing the mapping exercise of donor assistance in the field of parliamentary co-operation.

Local Democracy and Cross-Border Cooperation/Draft

The development of sound and effective local democracy institutions fully trusted by the population and able to respond quickly to their needs through the provision of adequate services, is a pillar for economic development and stability of the region. The main needs, as expressed by SEE local and regional authorities, are related to the implementation of legislation on local governance, capacity building, and awareness raising on decentralization, enforcement of the dialogue between all parties concerned and ensuring the participation of civil society.

- Support to the European Centre for Local Government Reform to be formalized by the Council of Europe.
- Enhance the implementation of the Work Plans and related measures and instruments agreed upon at the Ministerial Conference on Better Local Governance, in view of the Evaluation Conference, which will be held in Skopje in 2006.
- Enhance co-operation between SEE local authorities through further support to NALAS.
- Promote the creation of a forum for matchmaking between international donors, SEE partners and implementing agencies for the professionalisation and

depolitisation of local administrations and support the follow-up of the Donors' Assistance Mapping Exercise developed with the OECD/DAC and LGI-OSI.

- Support the implementation of the project of the Association of Multi-ethnic Cities of Southeast Europe, PHILIA, whose goal is to increase the level of cross border communication between multi-ethnic cities and towns of the countries of the region.
- Strengthen the already established Euroregions and micro-regions and promote specific cross-border projects with the active participation of local communities and international partners (EC, West East Institute etc).

Energy and other Regional Infrastructure

Ensure that both the countries of the region and the international community take a regional strategic approach to infrastructure development based on co-financing and institutionalised partnerships including transport, energy and environment, with a view to prioritising capital investment in order to benefit from economies of scale and encourage all to utilise the regional institutional mechanisms that have been put in place.

- After the signing ceremony of the Energy Community Treaty and establishment of the Energy Secretariat in Vienna, reorient the role of the Stability Pact in this field towards generating political consensus on ratification and implementation of the treaty and provision of information, particularly to parliamentarians.
- Generation of support among SEE countries and donors for the development of programmes to ameliorate the socio-economic impact of the Treaty and continue to promote private sector interest in the opportunities created by the Treaty.
- Active role in the Infrastructure Steering Group (ISG), encouraging an effective implementation of its mandate. Facilitate the removal of bottlenecks on regional infrastructure projects, through the organisation, on request, of "facilitation" meetings between countries and international financial institutions (IFI) and bilateral donors concerned and monitoring of follow up.
- Facilitate the development of political consensus among different partners for the implementation of the regional sectoral strategies including the extension of the EU's European Common Aviation Area (ECAA) agreement to SEE and further enhancement of multimodal transport policy.
- Building on the opening of the International Finance Corporation led centre of the in Sofia, facilitate the preparation of a limited number of demonstration Public Private partnerships (PPP) in the field of infrastructure jointly with the business community, placing emphasis on the establishment of a transparent regulatory framework for PPPs.

Trade, Investment and Employment

To foster a business climate conducive to investment, trade and employment through enhancing regional co-operation in policy development, implementation and promotion, including improving the functioning of the free trade agreements, supporting implementation of the priority FDI and SME policy reforms identified under the Investment Compact and upgrading employment policies in SEE, thereby facilitating sustainable economic growth in South Eastern Europe

- Facilitate implementation of the newly agreed programme for the identification, reduction and elimination of non-tariff barriers (NTBs) through regular reporting to the Trade Working Group and feedback from private sector via BAC, FICs and SECI PRO committees.
- As instructed by SEE Ministers on 10 June 2005, hold detailed exploratory talks on a single Free Trade Agreement for the region; issue recommendation to

Ministers on the launch of negotiations with a view to concluding an agreement under the auspices of the Trade Working Group in the course of 2006, that is fully compatible with international obligations including WTO.

- Enhance efforts to implement the FDI policy and SME development oriented reforms to which the SEE countries have committed themselves in the framework of the Investment Compact (IC), through increased coaching and use of peer reviews as well as improved, transparent and frequent reporting of progress. Contribute to a better investment climate by enhanced use of the information society in SEE.
- Continued improvement of the image of the region as a destination for FDI through the organisation of joint promotional events by all Investment Promotion Agencies in SEE.
- Further strengthen structured and constructive feedback from private sector to governments in SEE, by ensuring regular dialogue via the national Foreign Investors Councils, the Business Advisory Council for SEE (BAC).
- Following the second SEE Ministerial Meeting on Employment of October 21 in Sofia intensify the review processes to ensure the development and implementation of employment policies tailored to SEE circumstances but in line with EU and international standards.
- Under the cross cutting theme of “Enterprise Development and Employment Generation”, promote improvements in the overall environment for enterprise development by providing opportunities, through a small number of workshops, for government, private sector and social partners to meet outside traditional networks to discuss issues including role of education, corporate governance and the potential use of start-up funds.

Fighting organised crime and corruption

Organised crime and corruption undermine the political, economic and social development prospects of the countries of SEE. Fighting organised crime is thus essential for the development of the region and requires sound judicial systems and efficient law enforcement institutions. Effective action against trans-national crime also requires cooperation among SEE governments and with the EU and other international partners, and between networks of public prosecutors, legislators, the judiciary and law enforcement officials. SP initiatives such as SPOC, SPAI and the Police Forum are focusing on policy advocacy, revision of legislation, capacity building and developing operational networks for action at the national and regional level, in partnership with the SEECIP, the European Commission and with operational support of the SECI (Southeast European Cooperative Initiative) Regional Centre for Combating Trans-border Crime, in Bucharest.

- Support efforts to strengthen the SECI Regional Centre for Combating Trans-border Crime to become a strong partner for European and other international law enforcement institutions.
- Support SEE governments in achieving the targets set in the 18 May 2004 Bucharest Declaration by the SEECIP Ministers of JHA, in particular aiming at enhanced regional cooperation through existing co-ordination mechanisms at national and regional levels for the fight against organised crime and corruption and related initiatives.
- Monitor the implementation of the UN Convention against Trans-national Organised Crime and the UN Anti-corruption convention, in order to both register and demonstrate progress as well as to identify legal and institutional gaps and weaknesses, and to stimulate governments to take legal and practical steps to improve their implementation.
- Support the development of a regional network of public prosecutors under SEEPAG, with functions similar to those of the European Judicial Network.

- Enhance parliamentary awareness and support for fighting organised crime and corruption by linking actors in EU and South East European Parliaments.
- Further strengthen the SPAI Regional Liaison Office in Sarajevo (RSLO) and the SPOC Secretariat in Bucharest as regional centres for policy discussions, information exchange and capacity building regarding the fight against organised crime and corruption.
- Support the Organised Crime Training Network, established under the umbrella of the Police Forum, and cooperate through the Police Forum with the SECI Centre, to build regional police networks addressing specific organised crime related problems, such as stolen vehicles, trafficking in human beings and drugs trafficking.

Managing and stabilising population movements

Migration being one of the key challenges SEE is facing (regarding refugee return, brain drain, limited freedom of movement within the region as well as with the EU), development of regional strategies to handle population movements in a more comprehensive manner is crucial in the areas of asylum, legal and illegal migration as well as border management. By establishing the MARRI Regional Forum in April 2004, the Migration, Asylum, Refugee Regional Initiative has effectively moved towards regional ownership, while the Stability Pact will remain involved. Under the Ohrid Border Process the five SAP countries are moving towards integrated border management in accordance with European standards. Travel restrictions within the region are a major impediment to economic development and normalization of relations in SEE.

- Support the MARRI Regional Forum in achieving the priorities identified in its Tirana Declaration of 4 April 2005: to streamline visa procedures for travel by citizens of the Western Balkans within the region, to develop procedures for legal labour migration within the region and to develop the MARRI Regional Centre into a migration information clearing house. In this connection the Stability Pact will facilitate political support, provide expert advice, and support MARRI's fund raising activities.
- Promote an open discussion within the MARRI framework on visa facilitation .
- Continue to support the MARRI Access to Rights project as a tool for the realization of sustainable solutions for refugees and displaced persons in SEE and to promote non-discriminatory access to rights for all citizens of the Western Balkans in accordance with the *acquis communautaire* and in collaboration with the co-operation established through the Ministerial Declaration on Refugee Return concluded in Sarajevo 31 January 2005.
- Support the completion of the institutional framework of the MARRI Regional Centre by the end of the transition period in 2006 as part of the transfer to full regional ownership.
- Support in collaboration with the EC CARDS Integrated Border Management projects further progress under the Ohrid border management process by facilitating the process, by monitoring implementation of the specific commitments agreed to in the Ohrid Agreement and by seeking contributions from international stakeholders to strengthen border management capacities in the region.