



**Working Table I Meeting  
Sofia, 17 May 2005**

**Final remarks by Goran Svilanović,  
Chair of the Working Table I**

Yesterday we held our Working Table I meeting focused on two issues that of Regional Ownership and Youth policies.

We also took the opportunity to introduce Mr Diklic as our new Media chairman, which is of course a great example of the Region's contribution to the long term sustainability of SP initiatives.

Exchanging experiences on regional ownership is important since the countries of the region face similar problems that could be better addressed through a common approach.

WT I considers regional cooperation is an important element of the SAP and the regional approach remains an essential element of the EU policy towards the region, as reiterated in the Thessaloniki agenda.

After 6 years of SP WT I activities the results are varied: we have very positive examples of regional ownership, like the structure and work of the Gender Task Force, the PCTF (e.g. the Cetinje Parliamentary Forum), and the Media TF. The Secretariats of some initiatives (ERI SEE for education and NALAS) have also been transferred to the region. Although they have moved to the Region they are still being financed by international institutions and it is crucial that local communities take a more active role in the staffing, decision-making and financing of these activities. The Region's destiny is in its own hands and therefore governments should intensify their efforts and undertake concrete steps to carry out the necessary reforms, to strengthen their institutional capacities and further enhance regional cooperation.

Parliamentary Cooperation

As far as PC is concerned, the cooperation and reinforcement of the Cetinje Parliamentary Forum and other already existing initiatives should be promoted. The Region fully supports the idea of creating a Western Balkans COSAC.

The Region's interest in European integration issues is also evident in the repeated requests for assistance to strengthen the capacities of MPs and parliamentary staff, for example, through training.

The PCTF is also eager to see a greater SEE MPs level of participation at the meetings of the SEECP. Moreover, a greater involvement of SEE Parliaments

in all conferences of common interest would result in an increase in regional exchanges including benefits deriving from cross-border cooperation.

### LODE/CBC

With regards to LODE/CBC the inter-ministerial structure agreed in Zagreb should be implemented and the agreed work plans should be launched.

Cross border cooperation remains limited to specific issues like management of borders, water resources sharing, environmental protection and therefore greater emphasis should be placed on cross-border mobility. Moreover, the training of municipal authorities on cross-border cooperation should be promoted.

The NALAS network should be fortified through the provision of adequate funds, also from the central authorities. Furthermore, EU funding for local projects ought to go also directly to the municipalities and not only to the central government in order to implement the above more effectively.

### Education and Youth

Regional Ownership on Education should be developed through more active contributions from the Region (expertise, in kind contributions, financial involvement).

An Increase in the effective use of available national and regional networks, structures and resources, could result in a clearer European dimension of the reform processes (e.g.) Preparation for the new generation of community programmes, Bologna follow-up, Copenhagen Process).

Common interests with respect to the European dimension of education, could be identified, agreed and voiced on the occasion of the education ministerial conferences to come e.g. the one under the Austrian EU Presidency in 2006. The ERI SEE Secretariat has recently been transferred to the Region, but its institutional capacities should be strengthened in order to ensure sustainable regional ownership.

Education should be dealt with in a cross-table manner due to the various dimensions related to it. (E.g. Parliamentary cooperation, economic and social cohesion).

The SP will focus on a few issues in the field of education, research, innovation and technology where the cooperation between the European institutions of the countries (in and outside the European Union) is very important. The Region is expected to express clearly its needs and priorities and to participate actively to the development of this initiative.

### Media

Regional cooperation in the media is progressing as a result of foreign investment, expansion of domestic media in neighbouring countries and closer cooperation between the like-minded media outlets. In foreign investment, for instance, media organisations like WAZ, ORKLA and Ringier bought assets in various countries.

Domestic media like Pink and Beta work increasingly in other countries and many outlets share correspondents syndicate stories to share the costs. The Media TF contributed and will continue to do this by supporting regional cooperation in the field of media legislation, television production and networking between media initiatives.

### Gender

SP GTF will continue its work on regional projects supported by SP donors' community. European gender quality standards are an integral component of the *Acquis Communautaire*. The GTF relevance lies in its role as a SEE based institution whose work can make a valuable contribution to the new EC Framework Strategy on Gender Equality. As its role has been that of a bridge between the SEE Region and the EU institutions, making it a partner of the newly created European institute for Gender Equality, would only serve to strengthen this relationship.

### Youth

In order to develop what could become a South East Youth Agenda, the following three initiatives have been announced: a joint CoE, EC and SP high level experts' consultation meeting, a meeting with the South Eastern European Cooperation Process under the auspices of the Greek chairmanship in Autumn and a Conference of the Ministers for Youth of South Eastern Europe prepared jointly with the Council of Europe.

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