



# **Task Force Education and Youth The Enhanced Graz Process**

*Progress Report 2005*

# Task Force Education and Youth

## *Progress Report 2005*

### **Introduction**

The work of Task Force Education and Youth continued in line with the findings of the international conference “Governance and Education for Sustainable Development and European Integration” held in January 2005, and in accordance with the institutional mandate to contribute to the European dimension of education reforms by fostering the continuing integration of South Eastern Europe in the wider European Area of Education.

Throughout the year the ERI SEE accomplished a number of very focused activities that were launched and completed according to the Work Programme 2005 of the initiative. The last details concerning the establishment of the ERI SEE Secretariat were clarified as well. In parallel to, and in cooperation with the ERI SEE, the Task Force initiated an expert consultation process concerning the ongoing discussions about qualification frameworks in SEE and at EU level. The results of the process will be taken up in the education agenda of the Austrian Presidency of the European Council in the first half of 2006.

### **International Conference on “Governance and Education for Sustainable Development and European Integration”**

From January 27<sup>th</sup> to January 29<sup>th</sup> 2005 the TFEY/EGP organised an international conference under the title “Governance and Education for Sustainable Development and European Integration”. A broad range of institutional and expert actors from the education sector in SEE, EU and from international organisations participated in the event. Decision-makers from Ministries of Finance, Economy, European Integration, Labour and Social Affairs and from both SEE parliaments and the European Parliament took part too.

As indicated in the interim report of the Task Force from May 2005, the Graz conference not only recapitulated the work done, but in its findings it underlined the areas of importance in future education and training reforms in both the European Union and in South Eastern Europe. Education was reviewed in a wider context - in terms of its role for economic development, social cohesion, innovation, culture and diversity.

The conference recommendations underline the perspective of enriching education reforms in Europe through the notion of “Learning Society” as key to economic prosperity. Continuing education reforms in South Eastern Europe and the European Union has been given the highest priority. This would inevitably foster regional ownership, give a feeling of empowerment, self-awareness, creativity and motivation for continued learning.

The conference concluded that efficient education is a precondition for a knowledge based society - not only for economic development and scientific advancement, but also for enhancing social cohesion through fostering social capital elements like tolerance, trust and solidarity and to address effectively the challenges caused by globalization.

The participants indicated that ensuring effective support for education, also in South Eastern Europe, should be considered a priority task. Therefore, the importance of the Education Reform Initiative, as a regionally owned instrument and a political network for cooperation, was stressed. ERI SEE is considered capable of addressing the strong need for enhanced cooperation and coordination, at all decision making levels. It is equally capable of advocating with “a solid common voice” for the contribution of education to the modernization of societies. The participants underlined the need for quick, effective and feasible steps towards fulfilling the overall objectives of ERI SEE, including a series of capacity building measures for the region.

Additional information on the conference can be found at [http://www.see-educoop.net/graz\\_conference2005/index.html](http://www.see-educoop.net/graz_conference2005/index.html)

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

*The Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE) is a tool for supporting the shaping and implementation of education reforms in the Region, which takes into account both country-specific needs and challenges, as well as present trends in the development of the envisaged European Area of Education. ERI SEE thus serves as a communication and capacity building interface between ongoing education reforms at national level and European trends and developments in order to promote common European standards in education. The mission and objectives of the Initiative are based on the **Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministers of Education and Higher Education of South Eastern Europe** signed in Nicosia, Cyprus, in 2003. Ministers from Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, PISG Kosovo/UNMIK, Romania and Serbia, the Task Force Education and Youth/Enhanced Graz Process and the Stability Pact for Southeast Europe signed the Memorandum of demonstrating their commitment to the ERI SEE' s reform agenda.*

### **Institutionalisation Processes**

While the operational structure of the Initiative is already functioning, there have been different challenges with the establishment of the regional office in Zagreb. However, the process has entered its final stage and will be completed by the end of this year (2005).

The infrastructure and programme of ERI SEE are supported by KulturKontakt Austria, by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports of Croatia, by Bureau CROSS – The Netherlands, by the Norwegian Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, by the Ministry of Education and Research – Romania as well as through contributions by the Ministries of Education of SEE.

### **Work Programme 2005**

The Task Force Education and Youth actively participated in the design and drafting of the Work Programme 2005 of the Initiative, and is closely co-operating with ERI SEE on its implementation. In 2005 ERI SEE focused on **capacity building measures** for SEE in key areas of educational reform with emphasis on ongoing and future EU integration processes and with respect to the shared goals and objectives of the “Education and Training 2010”. Hence in 2005, the Secretariat organised a series of thematic seminars and conferences.

## **Support for the Participation in the “Integrated Lifelong Learning Programme” (new generation of EU community programmes from 2007 onwards)**

The first workshop (May 6-8 in Bucharest) concentrated on relevant aspects of the participation in the new Integrated Lifelong Learning (LLL) Community programmes. It drew from the experience of both EU Member states, and candidate countries - in particular Bulgaria and Romania, which are participating in the current Community programmes in the field of education and training (esp. Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci). The workshop focused on the requirements for participation in LLL programme, the ways to elaborate national strategies for the preparation of the programme, and facilitated the creation of a network of experts.

The second workshop (September 30 – October 1 in Sofia) focused on training the experts of the SEE ministries of education on project cycle management, on information for the importance of dissemination of information and selection of projects within the national context, as well as on the dissemination of best results, experiences and best practices. The sessions combined the theoretical approach with practical exercises for a better understanding of the concepts, with the aim of building concepts using the personal experiences of the participants. The workshop underlined the role of the decision makers in the SEE preparatory process of participation in the LLL programme and helped share best practices and experiences, drafted plans on dissemination and evaluation, and offered a consistent information on the structure and operational aspects of the LLL programme.

## **Bologna Process – Bergen follow-up measures**

In June 2005 ERI SEE and the European University Association organised a seminar on higher education, following the Bergen conference of the Bologna Process. Participants came from the Ministries of Education, Higher Education, universities from the Region and international experts that debated the challenges facing the implementation of the objectives set by the Ministers of Education in the context of the Bologna Process. The importance of cooperation in the Region was highlighted as a contribution to addressing common challenges and finding solutions in the context of the Bologna follow-up discussion. Furthermore, it was emphasised that a broader debate on education, seen as an investment in society, should be encouraged.

## **Investing Efficiently in Education**

For the second half of 2005 the Governing Board of ERI SEE identified the need for an expert workshop on investment in education. Increasing investment in education and using existing resources in education more efficiently is one of the key indicators for reaching the Lisbon goals. Given the financial challenges education systems face in SEE this is also a key issue for SEE countries. Thus an expert Workshop dealing with Investing efficiently in Education will take place on November 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> in Skopje, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

## **ICT in Education – the Role of Teachers and Teacher Training**

Skills in the field of ICT as well as using ICT as an innovative tool to increase the quality of teaching are one of the priorities in education reform. Teachers play a key role in bringing this about. The first in a series of workshops will focus on the training needs of teachers and the thus increase the newly arising demands on in-service teacher training structures.

During the upcoming Senior Officials and Governing Board Meeting the topics the Working Programme for 2006 will be discussed. Tentative thematic areas will include, quality in education and qualification frameworks in particular, preparation of the Western Balkans region in the new integrated Action Programme in LLL (also through continuation of the regional sharing of expertise), as well as ICT in education.

Additional information on the ERI SEE Working Program 2005 can be found under [www.erisee.org](http://www.erisee.org)

## **Consultation Process on Qualifications Frameworks**

“Quality in education” will constitute a leading theme in education during the Austrian Presidency of the European Council in the first half of 2006. In the framework of a Conference of Education Ministers scheduled to take place on 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> March 2006 in Vienna the focus will be on the European Qualification Framework of the first results of the currently ongoing consultation process between EU member states and candidate countries.

The Ministers of Education of the Western Balkan countries will be invited to participate in the conference on March 17<sup>th</sup>. As Western Balkan countries are not included in the EQF discussion process, however, they are at various stages of developing National Qualification Frameworks, the Task Force together with ERI SEE initiated an expert consultation process on the concept of a European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and its implications at national level.

A central element of this consultation process was the expert meeting “Towards a European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning – Relevance, Feasibility and Implications for SEE” which took place on 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> of October 2005 in Vienna.

The workshop sought to offer a forum not only for a sector-specific discussion on EQF, but also for a genuinely cross-sectoral approach to the topic. After a general introduction to EQF the first reactions of EU member states and states from South Eastern Europe concept were shared. Case studies provided further information on current discussions regarding the design and implementation of national qualification frameworks.

Participants included experts from all Ministries of Education from SEE, of Austria (upcoming EU Presidency), Hungary, the Netherlands, Finland (EU Presidency 2<sup>nd</sup> half of 2006) and Estonia and representatives from the European Commission, OECD and the European Training Foundation.

The results of the workshop will be offered as basis for a political debate within the ERI SEE member states at the next regular ERI SEE meeting of senior officials from SEE and of the Governing Board and Consultative Body of the initiative. The meetings will take place on 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> of November in Skopje and will be hosted by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.