



Task Force Education and Youth

The Enhanced Graz Process

October 2004

ERI SEE
Education Reform Initiative
of South Eastern Europe

Task Force Education and Youth

Activity Report January – October 2004

1. REALIZED ACTIVITIES

The 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 and the organisational structure of the ERI SEE**.

It has furthermore continued its efforts with regard to organizing international education conference in Moldova (**Strategy 2001**) in co-operation with the OECD.

In cooperation with Romania, being the acting chair of the SEECP, a **joint position of the ministers of South Eastern Europe has been prepared on the issue of Lifelong Learning** on the occasion of the 8th International Conference of Ministers of Education in Oslo (24 – 25 June 2004).

Preparatory work has been done with respect to the organisation of the **International Conference on “Governance and Education for Sustainable Development and European Integration”** to be held in Graz/Austria (27 – 29 January 2005).

Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE)

Establishment of an ERI SEE secretariat in the region:

Based on the criteria discussed on the occasion of the third Senior Officials Meeting in Belgrade (December 2003) and the subsequent drafting session held in Vienna, the Task Force Education and Youth started the ERI SEE tender procedure for hosting a secretariat in February by sending the revised TOR s, the application form and the respective guidelines to all signatory ministries of the Memorandum of Understanding giving them the opportunity to submit their applications for the Secretariat.

On the occasion of the 4th Senior Officials Meeting (Zagreb, 21-22 May 2004) representatives from respective Ministries further discussed the ERI SEE work programme as well as the selection procedure with regard to the secretariat to be established in the region by the end of 2004. Both, the Croatian and the Montenegrin Ministry of Education presented their applications. The official election procedure took place during the 8th Conference of European Ministers of Education in Oslo on 25 June 2004, where the eligible Ministries selected Croatia to host the envisaged secretariat.

In the meantime two meetings in September and October 2004 (Zagreb and Vienna) were being held with representatives of the Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports to prepare the establishment of a legal entity being the framework for the

ERI SEE secretariat. Both sides agreed that results with respect to the establishment of the secretariat will be introduced and discussed on the occasion of the envisaged fifth meeting of Senior Officials in Zagreb (November 26 – 27, 2004).

Establishment of the ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body:

In summer 2004 signatory Ministries nominated their representatives in the Governing Board of ERI SEE. The Governing Board consists of 11 representatives: one representative from the Task Force Education and Youth and one representative from each signatory Ministry of Education from South Eastern Europe (= Albania, Bosnia – Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, FYR of Macedonia, UNMIK/PISG Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia).

At the same time members of the Consultative Body were nominated by the former coordinating institutions of the Task Force (EUA, ETF, Council of Europe, OECD) plus donor countries and institutions, which contribute to the ERI SEE structure and programme: Italy, Norway, Switzerland and The Netherlands. Also the European Commission has been invited to join the Consultative Body of the ERI SEE.

Election of the director of the ERI SEE Secretariat:

Respective terms of reference have been sent out to eligible Ministries of Education and have been published on the website of the South East European Education Co-operation Network with a deadline for applications being August 15, 2004.

Out of 8 applications received the Task Force secretariat selected three applications according to their qualifications, which were sent out and evaluated by the members of the Governing Board. Based on these decisions, the new executive director will be appointed on the occasion of the 5th Senior Officials Meeting in Zagreb.

Other ERI SEE activities:

Within the ERI SEE capacity building measures a third regional expert seminar on Lifelong Learning took place on May 7 and 8, 2004. The two-day seminar gathered representatives of SEE ministries and experts, representatives of international organizations as well as experts from EU member states and candidate countries. The aim was to bring experts from EU and SEE together to discuss current trends and developments in the field of lifelong learning with special reference to ongoing discussions on the European and international level. The experts furthermore prepared a joint position for the EU Ministers' Conference in June 2004 in Oslo.

“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 support of regional ownership the seminar was organized by the Romanian country node presented through the Institute for Educational Sciences. This Institute is part of the South Eastern Educational Cooperation Network (SEE-ECN) (www.see-educoop.net) - the information backbone of the TFEY providing a virtual library and other information on education on national, regional and EU level.

Within the Strategy 2001, aimed at promoting education development processes in SEE countries at national and regional levels, the TFEY was in an intensive consultation process with the Moldovan Ministry of Education regarding an international education conference to follow up the dissemination of the education reform process to the wider education community. After several consultations with the Moldovan Ministry of Education, OECD, ETF and United Nations Moldova, the conference was jointly organised on June 14-15, 2004 under the auspices of the Stability Pact/Task Force Education and Youth. The international conference on the “Developments in the Education Sector in Moldova – future steps” supported the consultation process on education reform by providing a wider discussion forum such as the Stability Pact, which is an important instrument for donor co-ordination and identification of funding possibilities.

The establishment of the ERI SEE secretariat will mark the completion of the “Strategy 2001”, which has been part of the systematic approach of the Task Force Education and Youth towards education reform efforts on national and regional level. Its completion will be accompanied by an assessment of the Task Force efforts from 1999 – 2004 (conducted by University of Ljubljana) to be presented in the framework of the International Conference on “Governance and Education for Sustainable Development and European Integration” in January 2005 (see below).

8th Conference of European Ministers of Education

The conference was jointly organised by the Norwegian Ministry of Education, the Irish EU Presidency and the European Commission from 24 - 25 June 2004 in Oslo. As all previous conferences it included not only the EU Ministers but also ministers from the Associated Countries and South Eastern Europe.

Given the recommendations of the ERI SEE expert seminar on lifelong learning held in Vienna in May 2004, the Romanian Minister Alexandru ATHANASIU presented a joint position of the Ministers from South Eastern Europe, in which he stressed not only the importance of the development of lifelong strategies and more and better investments in human capital but also the importance of European conferences in this format for the exchange of information and experience with a view to strengthening the European Area of Education.

In a side meeting of this conference, the Romanian Minister of Education signed the Memorandum of Understanding of Ministers of Education from SEE. The Memorandum aims at a closer co-operation of Ministries from Southeast Europe with respect to the Education Reform Initiative of Southeast Europe (ERI SEE). The Memorandum had earlier been signed by the Ministers of Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, FYR of Macedonia, UNMIK/PISG Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia and the Stability Pact/Task Force Education and Youth.

For more information please see:

http://www.see-educoop.net/graz_2003/activities/erisee/frame_erisee.htm.

On this occasion Ministers/heads of delegation from eligible Ministries of South Eastern Europe selected Croatia to host the ERI SEE secretariat by secret ballot (see also above).

2. EVALUATION

The main characteristic of this reporting period is the further development of the ERI SEE in terms of fundraising, 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 which supported the tendering procedure for hosting the ERI SEE secretariat and the post of the executive director.

Furthermore, a general legal framework needed for an effective secretariat has been clearly identified by the Task Force but has to be set in place as a concrete legal entity in Zagreb to fulfil its organisational and operative tasks in Zagreb.

However, the political changes in some countries have to some extent influenced the tendering and nomination procedures showing once again the strong interdependence between education reforms and governmental and institutional structures.

The fact that all the Ministries have signed the Memorandum by now 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 Meeting in December and the Task Force Education and Youth continued its efforts in finalizing those commitments and turning them into concrete financial support for 2004/2005. Following intensive consultation processes between the Task Force Education and Youth and Norway, Italy, The Netherlands and Switzerland those countries officially announced their financial support for ERI SEE. Finally, the initiative will also be supported by the Austrian Development Agency and the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in the coming years. Negotiations with interested parties have to be continued to ensure sufficient funding for 2005/2006.

The Task Force Education and Youth has also managed to intensify the contacts with the European Commission thus further supporting the linkage between ongoing national education reforms in SEE and current developments within the EU and also giving an important signal to the SEE countries. The exchange of views with the EC took place in the framework of the ERI SEE seminar on lifelong learning (Vienna, May 7-8) being an important aspect of the Education and Training 2010 process within the EU. By basing this seminar on the Declaration of Lifelong 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 Education and Youth successfully channelled the efforts made by various actors and thus created synergies.

Another important achievement reached was the organization of the international conference on the implementation of education reform in Moldova on June 14-15, 2004 (see above). The joint effort of the international community together with the Moldovan Ministry of education successfully supported the national education system in participating in regional initiatives in education. The importance of this conference was twofold: bringing forward the discussion on educational development and support in Moldova but at the same time enabling 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.

3. CHALLENGES AND FURTHER ACTIVITIES

Establish the organisational structure of ERI SEE – by November 2004

The organizational structure of the ERI SEE will consist of the Governing Board, the Consultative Body and the regional Secretariat. The bodies will meet for their constituting session back to back with Senior Officials during the 5th Senior Officials Meeting in Zagreb (November 26 – 27, 2004). In this meeting the executive director of the secretariat will be appointed on basis of the selection procedure of the Governing Board Members.

Establish the full function of the ERI SEE Secretariat in the region in support of regional ownership – by beginning of 2005

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 in Zagreb by the end of 2004. Currently the Task Force Education and Youth together with the Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports negotiate the concrete legal and organisational measures of setting up the secretariat on basis of the given terms of references. It is expected that, based on the Croatian law and meeting the requirements of the Terms of references of the ERI SEE secretariat and the intentions of the Memorandum of Understanding of SEE ministers, a final solution can be found in a two step procedure. This procedure will ensure an immediate

functioning of the secretariat by end of the year and guarantee a more sustainable support by the Croatian Ministry in 2005.

In this process it has to be secured, that part of the organisational capacity of the Task Force secretariat in Vienna will be taken over by the secretariat in Zagreb to fulfil the overall requirements of ERI SEE.

Continue the already existing and starting new activities within ERISSEE

Based on the jointly developed Action Plan, the initiative will continue its work with the OECD project on “Education development for disabled and at risk students”.

Secondly it will continue the series of regional expert seminars with respect to selected topics to build upon education capacities in the education field (so far organised in 2003/2004: expert seminars on Teacher Training, ICT and LLL). The envisaged next expert seminar will be targeting the priority area of Human Rights Education and Education for Democratic Citizenship and will take place from 18 – 20 November 2004 in Graz.

The European Training Foundation with financial support of Italy only recently proposed a project on “Disseminating the Copenhagen Process to Southeast Europe” (= working title) which will start within the next months and aim at the implementation of one of the priorities of the ERI SEE action plan with regards to Vocational Education and Training.

A work programme for 2005 will be developed on the occasion of the 5th Meeting of Senior Officials in Zagreb (26 – 27 November, 2004)

Organise an international education conference on “Governance and Education for Sustainable Development and European Integration” (27 – 29 January 2005, Graz)

Six years after the establishment of the Graz Process and five years after the Graz Process was charged with the co-ordination of the Task Force Education and Youth by the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, it is due time to reflect on the current challenges and future perspectives of education development in South Eastern Europe.

To further facilitate and discuss the growing impact of education reform on economic and social development in South Eastern Europe and to facilitate co-operation among key actors in education, economy, social affairs and other areas of reform, the Task Force Education and Youth is organising an international conference in Graz on January 27–29, 2005. This conference will reconsider the role of education for democratisation, stability and economic development in the region as well as for its inclusion into an Enlarged Europe.

The conference will convene decision-makers from Ministries of Education, Finance, Economy, European Integration, Labour and Social Affairs from SEE, parliamentarians from the region involved in education issues, representatives from European institutions and international organisations, Stability Pact Co-ordinators, education experts and representatives from the media to provide a wide platform for discussion.