

Task Force Education And Youth

Enhanced Graz Process
Working Table 1, Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe



Third Working Meeting of Senior Officials from South Eastern Europe: EDUCATION REFORM INITIATIVE OF SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE

Belgrade, 8-9 December, 2003

Introduction

The Third Working Meeting Of Senior Officials from South Eastern Europe in Belgrade was hosted and organised by the Serbian Ministry of Education and Sports with the support of the Task Force Education and Youth/ Enhanced Graz Process (TFEY/EGP). 33 participants attended the meeting (see list of participants).

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss:

- (1) the progress report on the implementation of the EU "Work Programme on the follow-up of the Objectives of education and training systems in Europe" report (Draft Interim Report);
- (2) the Terms of References (TORs) of the ERI SEE Secretariat, their financial implications and the possible future location
- (3) ERI SEE's work programme 2004

Welcome addresses

Mr. Gaso Knezevic, Serbian Minister of Education and Sports, welcomed the participants stressing the importance for regional partnership and co-operation for the promotion of European integration. **Ms. Nina Sumolainen** addressed the participants on behalf of Ms. Rhen, Chair of Working Table 1. She welcomed the recent signing of the MoU at the Regional Table Meeting of the Stability Pact in Tirana (5/6 December 2003) by the ministries of Education of Moldova and Albania. The STP will support the countries of South Eastern Europe on their way to European integration and lobby for the opening up of student mobility programmes for SEE. She recommended that special attention should be laid on the support of Roma people and the involvement of parents in educational and school issues.

On behalf of Mr. Dobart, Chair of the Task Force Education and Youth/ Enhanced Graz Process, who was not able to attend the meeting for health reasons, **Mr. Gerhard Kowar** welcomed the participants and thanked the Serbian Ministry of Education and Sports for hosting the meeting.

Progress Report on the Implementation of the EU Work Programme "Education & Training 2010" (Draft Interim Report) and future prospects for 2004

Mr. Gerhard Kowar informed about the recently published interim progress report on the implementation of the "EU Detailed Work Programme on the follow-up of the Objectives of Education and Training systems in Europe" which can be found at http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/et_2010_en.html

He furthermore gave a short overview of ongoing discussions within the European Union. The European Commission proposed a high level Steering Group consisting of Senior Officials from EU member countries to streamline and accelerate the process.

Furthermore the interim report stated that EU members states should:

- *Concentrate reforms and investment on the key points in each country, in view of the situation of each and of the common objectives; at the Community level, this requires structured and continuous cooperation to develop and make the best use of human resources and achieve maximum investment efficiency;*
- *define truly coherent and comprehensive lifelong learning strategies, ensuring effective interaction between all the links of the learning chain and setting national reforms within the European context;*
- *create a Europe of education and training, particularly by rapid introduction of a European reference framework for qualifications in higher education and vocational training; such a framework is essential for creating a genuine European labour market, to facilitate mobility and make European systems more transparent;*
- *give "Education & Training 2010" its rightful place so that it becomes a more effective tool for formulating and following up national and Community policies, including beyond the current decade; the urgent nature of the challenges to be faced means we have to use the open method of coordination to the full - while fully complying with the principle of subsidiarity. In particular, the Commission feels that as from 2004 a mechanism should be put in place to monitor progress achieved on the basis of annual reports forwarded to the Commission by the Member States."*

These points are still under discussion. A joint report of the EC and the European Council will be published end of February.

Reflection on the Draft Interim Report from a Hungarian Perspective

Ms. Magda Farkas, Ministry of Education Hungary, EU Coordination Department presented the Hungarian Perspective on the Draft Interim Report. Hungary started and already joined the EU working groups in June 2002 (see ppt presentation).

Ms. Farkas also presented the results and analyses of the EU expert group on the concrete example of Teacher Training in Hungary (see ppt presentation). A problem that Ms. Farkas mentioned is that the 8 working groups work independently and overlap in various fields.

Mr. Gerhard Kowar pointed out the similarities between the ERI SEE strategy in establishing a best practice database, the linking of European experiences with national institutions and the Hungarian strategy of implementing the work programme.

It was concluded that sharing of experiences of accession countries should be also continued in the future.

Discussion:

Upon request of the participants Ms. Farkas informed about the Hungarian strategy of disseminating information on the EU objective report and the process made by the eight working groups. Furthermore she mentioned the Hungarian plans to evaluate the efficiency of investments already made in education.

Concerning the financing of EU mobility programmes Mr. Gerhard Kowar informed about the EU's strategy of covering the participation of SEE countries: 50% with money provided by PHARE and 50% coming from national budgets of the accession countries.

Objectives in Education and the results of two ERISEE expert seminars:

The aim of the two seminars was to bring experts from the European Union, candidate and Western Balkan countries together to give them the opportunity to learn more about the discussion process in the working groups of the EU detailed work programme on EU current and future priorities; furthermore to compare development trends in the EU with their respective national priorities and discuss the relevance/impact of joint EU discussion on national education developments.

Expert Seminar on Teacher Training:

Ms. Monika Mott from the Task Force Education and Youth secretariat presented the results of the Expert Seminar on Teacher Training held in Graz, 24-25 November 2003 within the framework of the ERISEE.

The main questions of the discussion were:

- how the role of the teachers changed in the knowledge based society and the new competencies required
- what are the new challenges (e.g. introducing ICT as a tool, working in teams, intercultural skills, how to motivate teachers as well as the problems of low income and brain drain)
- how to measure progress through indicators
- what is the role of universities and teacher education institutions - models of ongoing professional development of teachers in response to the above mentioned changes

Participants of the seminar noted that the debates on TT development on the EU level and in SEE are very similar and recommended the following:

- To give substantial support to the improvement of pre-service education
- to interconnect pedagogical institutions, pedagogical faculties, universities and schools
- to initiate a shift from a formal Teacher Training system to a more practically oriented system
- to systemise in-service education on basis of clear accreditation guidelines and capacity building
- to set up a frame for accreditation taking into account the existing frameworks in the countries

Discussion:

ETF informed about existing networks in the field of teacher training as established by the ETF and CEDEFOP and the need to bring networks together. CoE informed about the 3rd Informal Conference of Education Ministers to take place in April 2004 where teacher training will be one of the topics. In the discussion the following questions were raised: linking up with existing networks in the field of TT such as the ETF and the CEDEFOP network, teachers salaries, motivation of teachers and the recognition of informal learning for teachers.

b. Expert Seminar on ICT

Ms. Kanita Kovacevic, Task Force Education and Youth office presented the results of the Expert Seminar "Ensuring access to ICT for everyone" held in Graz, November 27-28, 2003.

As ICT is regarded only a tool, the topic of Teacher Training was again top priority.

Further points of the discussion and topics presented were:

- the lack of equipment in most SEE countries
- motivation (awarding) and career advancement of teachers
- the question of connectivity – increasing and systemising internet connections for schools
- presentation of software products (ECDL, content creation, learning management systems...)

The closing discussion focused on issues such as:

- possibilities of co-operation among SEE countries and between SEE and EU countries
- international standards
- dissemination of good policy examples
- decentralisation versus centralisation in terms of input/curriculum and output

Participants agreed upon that input or curricula should remain national, but that the output needs to be international and decentralised. There would furthermore be still a great need for more co-operation and exchange of information.

Discussion:

- the need for ICT education and Internet connectivity in schools,
- the question of the use of language
- the need for an information and technology strategy for SEE countries
- the question of dissemination and accessibility

Education Reform Initiative of Southeast Europe: activities 2003 and TORs

Mr. Gerhard Kowar gave a short outline about the background of ERI SEE, its aims and objectives, the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding as well as achieved and planned activities for 2004. In this respect he also mentioned the database for Best Practice Examples on the ERI SEE section of the newly restructured homepage (http://www.see-educoop.net/graz_2003/index.htm)

Donor Interest: At the Regional Table Meeting of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, 5 December 2003 in Tirana several countries expressed their support of the ERI SEE as an instrument for regional cooperation and ownership, amongst them: Switzerland, Norway, Austria and Italy. Further lobbying is needed and has to be intensified at all levels.

Discussion on the Terms of References for the Regional Secretariat:

Montenegro announced its interest in hosting the secretariat. The representative of Montenegro underlined her understanding of the secretariat as a technical unit.

Ms. Turajlic from Serbia emphasised the need for a long-term strategy to be continued despite government changes and that the Secretariat should therefore be placed under a non-governmental organisation. She offered the AAEN – Alternative Academic Educational Network to host the Secretariat.

The representative of Croatia stated that there is still a need to elaborate on the ERI SEE proposal in more detail regarding the aim, instruments, task and added value of the Secretariat. A feasibility study was rejected by the other countries based on previous experiences of the ECN as too costly and time-consuming.

In response, the representative of Macedonia noted that being based upon a concrete framework such as the Lisbon Declaration, the Bruges-Copenhagen Process, the Bologna Process as well as the MoU signed by seven Ministries of Education from SEE the ERI SEE already had certain instruments and had also received positive signals from the donor side.

Serbia as well as others expressed the need for a proactive initiative and regional co-operation.

The representative of Moldova expressed Moldova's commitment to ERI SEE but noted that at the present the contribution made can only be a symbolic one.

The Council of Europe as well as the OECD and the ETF support the aims and goals of the initiative and will support and co-operate with the ERI SEE network. ETF offered to help with the dissemination of information on the Bruges-Copenhagen process.

The discussion that followed focused on the tender procedure, its timeframe and the application form. Issues raised were the profiles for the staff, the commitments of the countries, the question of taxes, legal agreements with the secretariat and the constitution and identification of the Governing Board, the chair and vice-chair.

Task Force Education and Youth in close co-operation with SEE countries will set up a concrete and **transparent tender procedure** for the location of the regional ERI SEE secretariat. The Task Force Education and Youth will develop and send out an application form to Senior Officials. Commitments of the countries refer to the legal status, location as well as in kind contribution and the time frame for the commitment (mid- and long-term commitment).

The TORs were sent out earlier to the respective ministries of education in SEE and asked for their feedback by end of October. The role and duties of the Secretariat should be further elaborated to ensure a clear understanding of the envisaged role of the Secretariat.

Given the tight time frame it was agreed that a subgroup of volunteering Senior Officials would meet in Vienna for a further joint drafting session on the TORs in January 2004. The revised TORs and the application form will be sent out for feedback in January/beginning of February 2004. The tender procedure will be started by the end of February at the latest for a period of 30 days. After the screening by the TFEY secretariat a list of applications which are in line with the outlined criteria will be distributed to all SEE Senior Officials. The respective ministries will be requested to vote for their preferred location. The overall process will be finished before the next Senior Officials Meeting scheduled for April 2004.

*Please find enclosed **the revised Terms of Reference for the Secretariat** based on the work of the joint **Drafting Session in Vienna on 21 January 2004**. (Participants: Mr.Gerhard Kowar, Ms.Kanita Kovacevic, Ms.Monika Mott - from the TF secretariat, Ms.Ljiljana Subotic, Ms.Ivana Petricevic from the Montenegrin Ministry of Education and Science and Ms.Gordana Miljevic from the Serbian Ministry of Education and Sports)*

Education Reform Initiative of Southeast Europe: Development of a Work Programme for 2004

Discussion points for the Fourth Senior Officials Meeting:

- Decion on the location of the ERI SEE Secretariat
- Work Programme
- Nomination of Governing Board members

Croatia offered to host the Fourth Senior Officials Meeting in Croatia in April 2004.

ERI SEE Work Programme 2004 - Priorities and themes of interest:

to be sent out by the Task Force together with a ranking procedure

- Decentralisation
- Teacher Training (on a specific topic e.g. assessment of class level)
- Quality Assurance in Education in general and in Higher Education
- School management
- Pre-school education

Another important point all participants agreed was to continue the exchange and sharing of experiences with accession countries in further meetings. Ms.Monika Mott from the TFEY suggested to leave some space for the EU-feedback on the Interim Report and also for the topic Investment in Education.

Upcoming international meetings:

- OECD- Conference of Ministers of Education (Dublin, 18/19 March 2004) topic: „Improving the quality of education; teacher education policies; education and social cohesion“
- 3rd Informal Conference of Ministers of Education of SEE (Istanbul, 22-24 April 2004)
- Stability Pact Meeting of the Regional Table and Working Table Meetings: Portoroz, Juni 2004
- International Conference of European Ministers of Education to take place 24-25 June 2004 in Oslo with a focus on Life Long Learning (formal and non-formal)