

Task Force Education And Youth

Enhanced Graz Process

Working Table 1, Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe

Report on the Extended Task Force Meeting Brussels, January 14, 2002

1. Stability Pact

After the welcome by the Chair of the Task Force, Mr. Anton Dobart, the Deputy Special Co-ordinator of the Stability Pact, Mr. Donald Kursch, and the Director of Working Table 1, Mr. Robert Zeldenrust reported on recent events and future developments within the Stability Pact.

The recent events – the Regional Conference in Bucharest, October 25/26, the EU Council's Conclusions on the Stability Pact as of November 19, 2001, and the 5th meeting of Working Table 1 in Skopje, December 17/18 – had confirmed and mobilised support for the present priority areas of the Stability Pact. Mr. Zeldenrust stated that Education and Youth was generally referred to as being of critical importance for the stabilisation and democratisation process in SEE.

Ms. Barbara Weitgruber, vice-chair of the Task Force underlined, that both Stability Pact meetings gave the clear message, that the SP had entered a new phase. Hence SP activities should be complementary to the EU Stabilisation and Accession Process and should concentrate on a few targeted priority objectives. For Working Table 1 the main focus was put on the involvement of civil society, capacity building and networking at local government level and decentralisation.

With regard to the appointment of the new Stability Pact Special Co-ordinator, Dr. Erhard Busek, the Deputy Special Co-ordinator, Mr. Donald Kursch, reported on envisaged next steps within the SP. The Stability Pact should be seen as a catalyst and lobbying instrument bringing the countries of the region closer together and helping to maintain and expand donor support. To facilitate co-ordination and co-operation between the EU, the EC and the Stability Pact and to achieve concrete results in their joint efforts for stabilisation and democratisation in SEE, a monitoring group has been established comprising Mr. Erhard Busek, Ms. Catherine Day, Mr. Donald Kursch and a representative of Mr. Xavier Solana, which will meet in regular intervals.

In the future the Stability Pact will also work more closely with other SEE initiatives, such as the SEECP, SECI etc. in order to make use of synergies and avoid duplication of activities.

Mr. Busek will present his work plan to the General Affairs Council of the European Union on March 11. Prior to this date the Task Forces are expected to provide their work plans and priorities for 2002 to the SPSC. The Task Force Education and Youth already provided an outline of the work plan 2002 (c.f. attachment).

2. New Project Development and Networking with Donors

With reference to the procedures of project development sent out earlier to the Task Force members participants underlined that consultation with the donor community on priorities in education and youth as well as on their specific criteria for new project development should be continued to ensure coherence in the phase of project development. The representatives of donor countries confirmed their commitment to the Task Force's "Strategic Framework and Priorities for Action".

The Task Force will also seek more detailed information on already funded projects and on the respective implementation agencies. This information will be forwarded to the respective Working Group co-ordinators, who are requested to establish contacts where this seems useful.

Since January 18 a targeted call for proposals on regional projects is open in the areas of Education for Democratic Citizenship and History/History Teaching (c.f. www.see-educoop.net/portal/id_graz.htm > News). A call for projects on "Young People" will follow soon.

No calls for proposals will be launched in the areas of General Education, Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training at the present stage.

3. Reports from the Working Groups

Working Group on Higher Education

As the decision on a number of project proposals submitted within the TEMPUS framework is still pending, the Working Group decided not to launch a new call for proposals at present. Mr. Lewis Purser informed the participants, that the deadlines for project submission at TEMPUS will be aligned to the time frames of the Academic Year starting with the next deadline in December 2002 for the Academic Year 2003/04.

The project "Regional University Network on Governance and Management of Higher Education in SEE" has finally received funding by the EC and started implementation. Mr. Jan Sadlak from UNESCO-CEPES outlined the project's objectives and structures. The first meeting of the Steering Committee is scheduled for March 21-24 in Vienna. A meeting of the Working Group on Higher Education is planned to take place prior to this meeting.

Mr. Sadlak also presented a project on brain drain in SEE, which will be implemented by UNESCO-CEPES conditional on further funding sources. The project aims at identifying and analysing the current state of brain drain in several SEE countries. In each country a national co-ordinator will be identified, who will be responsible for the dissemination of a questionnaire to the respective Ministries of Education to collect respective data. The results will be analysed in a report and recommendations given, which will be discussed at an international seminar.

The Task Force will inform its members about the contact persons for the project in the respective countries and would ask them for help in identifying further contact persons where necessary.

Working Group on Education for Democratic Citizenship

Ms. Michela Cecchini, co-ordinator of the Working Group on Education for Democratic Citizenship/Management for Diversity, presented three important reports, which have been finalised recently:

- Stocktaking Research on EDC policies and legislation in 9 SEE countries and a regional analysis with recommendations. Draft reports are already available.
- Save the Children conducted a country-specific research on the situation of Roma minorities in the education systems of SEE countries, which was presented to key stakeholders at an

international conference in Budapest in November. The full report is available on the homepage www.savethechildren.org.uk/development/reg_pub/daf.htm

- Monitoring report on the EDC Quick Start Projects with recommendations for future project development (c.f. www.see-educoop.net/portal/id_graz.htm > Working Groups > Citizenship)

In the new round of projects on EDC there will be two sources:

1) Follow-up initiatives of existing Quick Start Projects

2) New projects in targeted priority areas

(c.f. "call for projects" on www.see-educoop.net/portal/id_graz.htm > News)

The next Extended Meeting of the Working Group will take place in Ljubljana, February 21-23 following the Extended Working Group Meeting on General Education.

Working Group on History/History Teaching

At the last meeting of the working group in Sarajevo, 16/17 December 2001 the development of TOR for new proposals (see www.see-educoop.net/portal/id_graz.htm > News) as well as the future role and tasks of the Working Group within the framework of the Stability Pact were discussed. It was generally agreed that the Working Group should not only be a *reporting* body for sharing ideas, experience and expertise, but should also *proactively* facilitate co-operation between projects, experts and countries to improve history education at all levels.

Participants also raised the issue of dissemination of the results and experiences of the Quick Start Projects to a wider community interested in history education. Possible forms of dissemination (e.g. publications, events) will be further explored.

The next working group meeting is scheduled for November 2002. The full report on the meeting will soon be available on the homepage/working group section.

Working Group on Young People

The Working Group met in Bulgaria on October 7 subsequent to the Youth Policy Forum, which brought together Government and NGO representatives from SEE countries, some of them also took part as observers in the WG meeting. The meeting focussed on the issue of youth policies in the region, giving an overview of different activities achieved so far, e.g. the Romanian National Youth Action Plan, the EC - white paper on youth policy in Europe.

The next working group meeting will take place in Bucharest in March to assess the results of the previous activities of the Working Group and discuss future strategies and activities.

A targeted call for regional projects in the field of "Young People" will be launched on the homepage soon. The TOR and timelines are currently being finalised. .

Working Group on Vocational Education and Training

As the WG Co-ordinator, Mr. Anthony Gribben, has been on mission in the region for several weeks, detailed information on Working Group activities could not be obtained.

Working Group on General Education, Policy Development and System Improvement

Over the last months the Working Group has focussed on the finalisation of the OECD Thematic Reviews and their endorsement by the respective Ministries of Education.

By now the reviews on Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, FRY/Kosovo, FRY/Montenegro, FRY/Serbia, and Romania are available on the homepage (www.see-educoop.net). The reviews on Albania, Bulgaria and Moldova are being finalised. The group has also been active in the preparation of launching events in SEE countries, in order to

discuss the recommendations of the OECD Thematic Reviews and overall issues of education policy and reform, see point 4.

No call for projects will be launched at the present stage.

The next Extended Working Group Meeting in Ljubljana, February 21, will focus on the dissemination of the OECD reviews, their value for enhanced co-operation amongst the respective working groups and further strategy development, especially for regional co-operation.

4. Launch of the OECD Thematic Reviews

At the 2nd Informal Conference of Education Ministers from SEE in Strasbourg, participants underlined the importance of the OECD Thematic Reviews and expressed their readiness to support the dissemination of their results.

The launches of the OECD Thematic Reviews make good progress. The first national dissemination seminars took place on January 16/17 in Belgrade, on January 18 in Podgorica. A short report on the outcomes of these conferences will be circulated amongst the Task Force Members, beginning of February 2002.

Ms. Nada Jakir from the Ministry of Education shortly outlined the concept of the planned launching conference in Croatia, planned for May 2002. It will also provide an opportunity to present the EDC stocktaking research. In addition to the Croatian educational community, the donor community will also be invited to attend the conference.

In other SEE countries similar events are envisaged to take place during 2002. In this respect the Chair of the Task Force underlined the importance of the OECD launch for starting an inclusive discussion process on education reform strategies and asked the Task Force members from the region to support lobbying for these events within their Ministries.

The Task Force invited those countries, which have not planned such an event yet, to explore the possibilities for joining this process and offered its support in preparing dissemination events.

Task Force members were also kindly requested to assist their Ministries in filling in the matrix on the identification of areas for regional co-operation, which had been sent out following the Strasbourg Conference, and should be returned to the OECD project co-ordinator, Mr. Ian Whitman (email: ian.whitman@oecd.org) as soon as possible. The upcoming Extended Meeting on General Education in Ljubljana will provide an opportunity for further discussion on this issue.

5. South East European Educational Co-operation Center

The establishment of the ECN is well under way. For further information, see attached document: TF_EY_Input200102_6.0.doc

6. Co-operation with other Task Forces

The TF on Refugee Matters and the TF on Media were invited to the meeting to present their work and to jointly explore the possibilities for co-operation.

The Executive Secretary of the TF on Refugee Matters, Mr. Kilian Kleinschmidt, pointed out that "education" is one of the key factors for the refugees' decision on returning home or not.

Main obstacles to refugee return are: restricted access to the education system for refugee children (topic is also addressed in the OECD Thematic Reviews); biased education (e.g. in history teaching, language teaching), problem of intolerance and conflicts at school in general.

The TF on Refugee Matters concentrates mainly on those geographic areas, where long-term solutions are feasible, i.e. Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and FRY/Serbia. For detailed information on the objectives and strategies of the TF on Refugee Matters, c.f. Agenda for Regional Action

(2001-2003) on the Stability Pact Homepage.

www.stabilitypact.org/stabilitypactcgi/catalog/cat_descr.cgi?subcat=1&prod_id=8)

As a first step a needs analysis of the situation of refugees in the education system in BiH will be conducted within the next couple of months. The Task Force Education and Youth will help to identify respective experts.

Furthermore the two Task Forces will exchange relevant information on crosscutting issues and events and explore further areas for co-operation. The TF Education and Youth network will provide support in contact and awareness raising on refugee issues. TF members are requested to forward relevant information (e.g. contact persons/ departments responsible for refugee issues at the Ministries of Education, respective legislation and other documents, information on ongoing projects, events etc.) to the Task Force Education and Youth office, which will pass it on.

On behalf of the Chair of the Task Force on Media, Mr. Michael Zenner, who could not participate in the meeting due to other commitments, Mr. Zeldenrust gave an overview of activities within the TF Media. Several projects concern the training of journalists. It was agreed to exchange relevant information between the Task Forces and to explore possibilities for co-operation. (For further information on the Media Task Force, c.f.

www.stabilitypact.org/stabilitypactcgi/catalog/cat_descr.cgi?subcat=1&prod_id=5)

7. Work Plan 2002

In addition to the issues already raised above, Task Force members are kindly asked for their continuous support for the objectives and work plan for 2002 (c.f. enclosed outline) through:

- support to networking and flow of information at national level, i.e. between the Task Force Members, National co-ordinators for the Stability Pact and Working Group Members . Furthermore the "nodes" of the ECN will contribute to an enhanced flow of information at national level. The Task Force will provide the respective contact persons and institutions.
- lobbying and support for the preparation of the national dissemination events on education policy and system reform within their ministries as well as in the wider education community. In this context they are also kindly requested to support their Ministries in the identification of priorities for regional co-operation (c.f. matrix sent out to the Ministers after the Strasbourg Informal Conference)
- dissemination of relevant information on activities and funding mechanism at the respective national or institutional levels either directly among the Task Force network or via the Task Force office,
- support the identification of contact persons for the "brain drain project" where necessary (the Task Force will provide further information on the project).