

# **Task Force Education and Youth**

Enhanced Graz Process

Working Table 1, Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe

## **Report on the Meeting of the Task Force Education and Youth Zagreb, October 25, 2002**

### **Opening Statements /Reports/ Discussion**

1. The Task Force Education and Youth meeting in Zagreb, October 25, 2002 gathered about 40 representatives of SEE Ministries of Education, international institutions and donor countries (c.f. enclosed list of participants). In his opening speech the Deputy Minister of Education and Sports of the Republic of Croatia, Mr. Ivan Vavra, pointed out that education system reform needs a long-term approach and underlined the importance of continuing efforts in education reform, that have been taken in SEE countries and also in the framework of the TF Education and Youth. For the case of Croatia important reform issues are disburdening the curriculum, creation of key implementing institutions, decentralisation, introduction of foreign language teaching.
2. The National Co-ordinator of Croatia to the Stability Pact, Mr. Gordan Markotic, stated that Croatia actively promotes regional co-operation within the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe and underlined that education and youth should have a place in the future development of the Stability Pact.
3. The Chair of the Task Force Education and Youth, Mr. Anton Dobart, welcomed the participants, and outlined the major strategic developments within the Task Force Education since its beginning – from Quick Start Projects to a mid- and long-term perspective in education reform. After the first successful launching events of the OECD Thematic Reviews on Education Systems in SEE countries, the focus of TF activities should now also take into account major trends and developments at European level, e.g. the "EU Objective Report on Education and Training Systems in Europe", the Bologna Declaration on Higher Education and the Bruges Process in the field of Vocational Education and Training.

4. The Director of Working Table 1, Stability Pact, Mr. Robert Zeldenrust, then outlined the three new strategic objectives of the Stability Pact, namely

- enhanced complementarity with the SAP
- regional co-operation,
- and a global approach to addressing specific issues in greater detail.

In order to ensure a cohesive approach and concrete outcomes in 2003, these objectives should also provide the strategic framework for the Task Forces. In this context Mr. Zeldenrust welcomed the TFEY proposal to launch an initiative in order to strengthen the European dimension in education reform processes in South Eastern Europe and to reinforce dialogue with EU institutions in the field of education and youth. It will be paramount for each SEE country, he underlined, to define a clear road map with realistic deadlines in this framework, in order to facilitate the process of accession and integration into the wider European area of education.

Given the importance of cross-table/task force co-operation and cross-cutting initiatives Mr. Zeldenrust shortly presented two new Stability Pact initiatives, on "Local democracy and cross-border co-operation" and on "Reconciliation". The latter is currently being elaborated and will be presented to the Task Forces of WT1 in greater detail soon, in order to identify possible areas for co-operation.

Referring to the envisaged work plan of the Stability Pact for 2003 representatives from Norway, the Council of Europe and the European Training Foundation underlined the importance of increasing the ownership of the region in these processes, but also raised the question, which role other non-EU countries will play in the framework of the Stability Pact in the future. It was pointed out by the Chair of the Task Force that based on its inclusive approach the TF will continue to involve non – EU countries in the ongoing work. According to this Norway and Switzerland will have observer status during the upcoming Working Meeting of Senior Officials from SEE education ministries, scheduled for December 5 – 7, 2002 in Vienna.

5. Participants were informed on the status of the "Strategy 2001" – the launch of education policy and reform conferences in SEE countries based on the OECD "Thematic Reviews of National Policies for Education". In 2002 four conferences have taken place up to now: Serbia (16/17 January), Montenegro (18 January), Croatia (24/25 May) and Kosovo (10/11 June). In September a follow-up conference to assess progress made in education reform took place in Serbia. Further launching conferences on education are envisaged for early 2003 (Romania, February 2003) and spring 2003 (Albania and Bulgaria).

The conferences, that have taken place so far, gathered several hundred key actors each (representatives of the respective educational community, decision-makers, experts, NGOs, international institutions, donor community) and provided substantial input to education policy development and reform plans.

The following reports by TF representatives from South Eastern Europe provided a comprehensive picture of the current status of education policy development and of substantial progress made in education reform in the different countries/entities.

*(c.f. Appendix 1: Reports on Bosnia-Herzegovina/Republika Srpska, Croatia, Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Romania; reports by other countries will follow).*

6. Building on the "Strategy 2001" the TF secretariat presented an outline of a follow-up "Initiative on Supporting Education Reform Implementation in SEE in view of the Accession and the Stabilisation and Association Processes" to be endorsed by the Task Force plenary. This initiative will take into account both country-specific needs and demands in education reform as well as current trends in the development of the envisaged wider European Area of Education, as outlined in the EU "Detailed Work Programme on the follow-up of the objectives of education and training systems in Europe" (c.f. Appendix 2: draft outline of the initiative). The upcoming meeting of Senior Officials of Ministries of Education from SEE countries (Vienna, 5-7 December), together with their counterparts from EU (present and future EU presidencies) and Candidate countries as well as representatives from the European Commission plus additional observers will provide an opportunity to discuss and further elaborate the planned initiative.

In view of the new strategic focus of the TFEY the secretariat also suggested some changes in the TF's working structure, in terms of achieving greater coherence and better co-ordination between the different bodies of the TF in view of the implementation of the initiative. Thus it was suggested to replace the Technical Committee of the TF with an enlarged Working Group on General Education, Policy Development and System Improvement as the main strategic body of the Task Force by involving the existing networks in all priority areas (=Working Groups) to further strengthen the systematic approach on policy level (c.f. Appendix 3: Proposed Structure of the TF).

Participants welcomed the proposed "Initiative on Supporting Education Reform Implementation in SEE in view of the Accession and the Stabilisation and Association Processes" and highlighted several aspects, which should be taken into account in its further elaboration and implementation:

- importance of regional ownership for the initiative
- inclusion of civil society representatives in the initiative
- providing greater visibility to education reform achievements and clear country-specific road maps on the future activities
- clarification of the role of the different Working Groups in the initiative and of possible forms/areas of co-operation between the extended Working Groups
- Review the role of the Board for Excellence in view of the planned initiative and in reinforcing the credibility and visibility of Task Force activities

## **7. Reports by the Working Groups:**

### **Working Group on Policy Development and System Improvement**

Based on the outcomes of the Working Group Meeting in Ljubljana, held on February 21, 2002 the work concentrated on the preparation and organisation of the OECD Thematic Reviews in close co-operation with Education Ministries in SEE (for the results see above). Most of the "Quick Start Projects" monitored by the working group could or will receive additional international funding for a second

project phase (i.e. Kosovo Education Centre, PISA, South East European Education Co-operation Network). Currently the OECD is negotiating with the international donor community for financial support for the project on "Education Development for Disabled and at Risk Students". The World Bank and Norway will provide substantial funding, negotiations with Finland are underway.

The Ljubljana Meeting also gave the opportunity to discuss the recommendations of the OECD Thematic Reviews and of the Regional Overview with members and co-ordinators from other TF workings groups, thus strengthening the overall strategic approach of the Task Force. *(For the full WG report, please, see: <http://www.see-educoop.net> > Enhanced Graz Process > Activities > Calendar)*

### **Working Group on Vocational Education and Training**

Mr. Arjen Vos, Head of South East Europe Department of the European Training Foundation, gave a short report on the status quo on the "VET Reform Policy Peer Reviews" currently carried out in Albania, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia. These Peer Reviews are a follow-up to the OECD Reviews and will contribute to the CARDS programming cycle in the field of VET. Currently reports on the basis of country missions are being drafted and will be presented to the education community in the respective countries in spring 2003. Peer Review teams consisted of experts from the ETF, EU member states, Candidate countries and the region (Western Balkans), thus providing well balanced European expertise.

### **Working Group on Higher Education**

Mr. Liviu Matei, co-coordinator of the Working Group, outlined the profile and priorities of the Working Group, namely its function as a resource group, e.g. helping its members to find expertise in specific areas, and facilitating exchange of information and experience between its members.

At the last WG meeting in Vienna, March 2003, the Working Group identified 5 priority areas, which are of importance across the region and should be addressed by increased regional co-operation: Legislation, university structures, quality assurance, ECTS, ethical standards and transparency. *(For the full WG report, please, see: <http://www.see-educoop.net> > Enhanced Graz Process > Activities > Calendar)*

This presentation was completed by a short report on the implementation status of the project "Regional University Network" by Mr. Jan Sadlak. *(For more information on the project, please, see: <http://www.cepes.ro>).*

### **Working Group on History and History Teaching**

Ms. Alison Cardwell, co-ordinator of the Working Group gave an update on the status of ongoing projects in the framework of the working group, e.g. a book on multiperspectivity in history education has been produced and will soon be translated and published in the languages of the region. Ms. Cardwell underlined that the WG has been a useful forum for discussion and networking between experts from SEE countries and beyond. At the upcoming WG meeting in Tirana at the end of November the WG achievements so far will be discussed and assessed by its members. *(For the full*

WG report, please, see: <http://www.see-educoop.net> > Enhanced Graz Process > Activities > Calendar)

### **Working Group on Education for Democratic Citizenship/Management of Diversity**

The last WG meeting in Ljubljana, in February 2002, focused on the presentation of three stocktaking reports: CoE stocktaking research on EDC policies in SEE countries (<http://www.see-educoop.net>>Library), "Denied a Future?" Report on educational provision for Roma children in SEE ([http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/development/reg\\_pub/index.htm](http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/development/reg_pub/index.htm)), Monitoring Report on the implementation of the EDC Quick Start Projects (<http://www.see-educoop.net> > Enhanced Graz Process > Working Groups > EDC), which have been elaborated in the framework of the WG and should serve as a basis for future projects in the field of EDC/MoD in SEE countries. (For the full WG report, please, see: <http://www.see-educoop.net> > Enhanced Graz Process > Activities > Calendar).

Ms. Olof Olafsdottir of the Council of Europe, has recently taken over the co-ordination of the WG by Michela Cecchini. She welcomed the idea of participating in an enlarged Working Group on "Policy Development and System Improvement", but also pointed out that the details of the future role and working structure of the WG EDC/MoD should be discussed at the next WG meeting, envisaged for the beginning of 2003.

### **Working Group on Young People**

At the last WG meeting in Kotor, September 2002, the Montenegrin authorities presented their concept for the development of a comprehensive Youth Policy Action Plan, with active involvement of all relevant Ministries. So far Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia and Serbia and Montenegro have started the development of such Youth Policy Plans (the Romanian one is already accomplished), FYR of Macedonia and Albania are about to start. The Working Group provides a forum for the presentation and exchange of experiences in the development of such plans as well as a networking platform for project implementing institutions and donors. (For the full WG report, please, see: <http://www.see-educoop.net> > Enhanced Graz Process > Activities > Calendar)

At the next WG meeting in Thessaloniki in November, the Working Group will prepare an input for the 6<sup>th</sup> European Conference of Ministers of Youth of the Council of Europe, 7 – 9 November in Thessaloniki, and discuss achievements made so far by the WG and its priorities and work plan for 2003.

8. Ms. Valerie Nadrai of the Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings, and Ms. Anelise Araujo-Forlot of IOM, gave an overview of the problem of trafficking in SEE countries and presented their initiatives to raise awareness on this issue and to fight trafficking in SEE countries. The TF on Trafficking in Human Beings and the TF on Education and Youth plan to launch a joint initiative on awareness raising on trafficking in the field of formal and non-formal education to be presented at the next TF Trafficking meeting in spring 2003.

## 9. Results of the meeting

- The proposed "SEE Education Reform Initiative in view of the Accession and the Stabilisation and Association Processes" was endorsed by the participants. The suggestions made by the participants (see above) will be taken into account in the further elaboration of the initiative. Any additional comments/feedback should be sent to the Task Force Secretariat by October 31.
- The outcome of the TF meeting will be taken into account in drafting the "Strategy and Work Plan for 2003" to be submitted to the SP office by beginning of November
- The Working Groups should discuss their future co-operation with and participation/representation in an enlarged Working Group on Policy Development and System Improvement in their upcoming meetings (e.g. Young People: Thessaloniki, 6 November; History Teaching: Tirana, 21/22 November; EDC/MoD: January 2003).
- The Task Force secretariat will elaborate the suggestions on the new working structure of Task Force bodies based on the outcome of the Senior Officials' Meeting and of Working Group discussions.
- The participants underlined the importance of organising future meetings in the region of Southeast Europe, thus enhancing the regional perspective of its work. Therefore participants also agreed upon a rotating Co – Chairmanship.
- The upcoming meeting of Senior Officials in Vienna, December 5-7, will provide an opportunity to discuss and further elaborate the outline of the endorsed "SEE Education Reform Implementation Initiative".