

Report

Second Session of the ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body EDUCATION REFORM INITIATIVE OF SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE (ERI SEE) Podgorica, 28 May 2005

The second ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body meeting has been organized on the 28th May 2005, in Podgorica, Montenegro by the ERI SEE Secretariat and the Montenegrin Ministry of Education and Science.

Present at the meeting were the nominated representatives of Montenegro, Bulgaria, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Romania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Task Force Education and Youth; experts with an observer status replaced the nominated representatives from Albania, Croatia and Serbia.

The consultative body was represented by the Council of Europe, the Ministry of Education and Research of Norway, the Stability Pact Office, Bureau Cross- the Netherlands, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, the European Training Foundation, the European University Association, by KulturKontakt Austria, and by the OECD.

The participants have approved the agenda of the meeting and the following topics have been discussed:

- Reports on establishment of the ERI SEE Secretariat (structure of the national agency and agency statute)
- Reports on ERI SEE activities – first semester 2005 (results of the workshop on LLL programme, Bucharest 6-7 May 2005), financial issues 2005 and next steps for implementing 2005 working programme)
- ERI SEE 2006 working programme- directions to be developed
- Lobbying and fundraising issues

1. Report on the Establishment of the ERI SEE Secretariat

Ms. Alida Matkovic, the representative of the Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, has presented an update on the situation of the ERI SEE Secretariat legal and institutional framework.

As indicated, the ERI SEE Secretariat has been established in Croatia as a national governmental agency with the approval of the Government on the 20 January 2005 (published in the Official Journal) and entering into force by 1 February 2005. The structure proposed for the agency includes Governing Board, director, Consultative Body and the Secretariat. The venue of the Secretariat is provided at the Centre for Technological Transfer of the University of Zagreb.

A statute of the Agency has been elaborated by the legal department of the Ministry and forwarded to the representatives of the Task Force and GB members for comments and observations. A list of questions has been sent to the Croatian authorities and clarifications have been presented during the meeting.

Following steps are envisaged by the Croatian authorities:

- Nomination of the GB members by the Croatian Government- pending on the nomination of the representative of Bosnia-Herzegovina
- Nomination of the executive director of the Agency by the Government, based on the proposal of the GB
- Endorsement of the Agency's statute based on the approval of this document at the level of the GB members
- Finalizing all the legal aspects until the end of July 2005

During the discussions, based on the text of the Statute- the English version available –a series of questions were asked for clarification. The Consultative Body members requested to have an opinion of the final draft of the Statute, before its approval by the GB.

The representative of the Stability Pact Office stressed the international character of the agency and the need for a strong Governing Board able to take responsibilities and decisions. Also it has been emphasized the necessity for finalizing the legal aspects related to the functioning of the Secretariat in Croatia.

Several participants have raised the issue of a sound financial management and in this respect it was recommended that the Secretariat has an accountant or accounting service to be contracted, also providing an external audit. This aspect will be clarified in accordance with the available budget and upon discussions with the Croatian authorities.

Taking into consideration the reactions of the GB members and the clarifications requested, (especially with regards to the responsibilities of each structure of the agency) it has been decided that each member of the GB and CB can put forward questions/clarifications/suggestions and send them to the **Task Force by 3rd of June 2005 (all the questions will be then forwarded to the Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports). It has been further agreed that the answers from the Croatian side should be expected by 13 June 2005.**

2. Reports on ERI SEE activities – first semester 2005

The executive director of the ERI SEE Secretariat has presented an activity report on the first semester of 2005 concentrating on:

- The results of the first seminar on capacity building measures that has been organized on 6-7 May 2005- lessons learnt and outcomes,
- The first issue of the ERI SEE Newsletter, the financial situation: budget available (currently 150,000 euro) which covers the planned activities of 2005, list of donors (Austria, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Norway)

- Future activities: the second capacity building seminar, the thematic seminar on investing efficiently in education, the proposed ICT in education seminar (based on a proposal of the Dutch Ministry of Education and Science).

Proposals have been made for new activities to be jointly organized with the ERI SEE Secretariat in 2005, as presented during the meeting:

- Romania addressed the invitation for participation of the SEE experts in quality of VET to a conference that will be organized on 7-8 October 2005 in Romania. The conference has the objective to present the results of implementing in Romania the European Qualification Framework on Quality Assurance in VET and discussions on future steps. The expenses for participation of the experts from the SEE will be entirely covered by Romania
- Austria proposed to invite the SEE experts participating into the Romanian conference to the conference on "Quality in education", to be organized in the first semester of 2006 under the framework of the EU Presidency
- Bureau CROSS, on behalf of the Dutch Ministry of Education and Science proposed to organised jointly with the ERI SEE Secretariat an ICT in education seminar - with the aim to facilitate information exchange on international standards and application in the sector of ICT in education, with a special focus on teacher training in applying ICT in the education process.
- Austria proposed to organize in autumn 2005 or at latest January 2006 an expert meeting for preparing the conference of the European ministries of education that will be organized on 16-17 March 2006, under the Austrian Presidency of EU

As a contribution to the activities developed under the ERI SEE framework, the representative of Romania announced that the Romanian minister of education has decided to support the expenses of the Romanian participants to the SOM and GB meetings from the national budget and to co-finance the organization of the activities to be developed in Romania. In this context, the first seminar that has been organized in Romania benefited of the financial support of the Romanian Ministry of Education and Research.

The representative of the European University Association has introduced the main objectives of the seminar on higher education that will be jointly organised with ERI SEE Secretariat and CEPES-UNESCO, at the beginning of July 2005.

The representative of the European Training Foundation highlighted the projects and activities to be developed in the region, such as: Copenhagen national coordination meeting in September 2005, peer review with focus on the curriculum development in the region in Bulgaria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, FYR Macedonia and Serbia, final conference on strategies for adult learning in October 2005, national qualification framework conference in November 2005 and meeting of the teacher training network on VET- November 2005.

The representative of FYR Macedonia has proposed to host the next Senior Officials, Governing Board and Consultative Body meetings together with the thematic seminar on investing efficiently in education. **A date was put forward for discussion among GB members, 23-27 November 2005. Until 3rd of June the ERI SEE Secretariat will receive reactions on this proposal.**

3. ERI SEE 2006 working programme- directions to be developed

The executive director of the ERI SEE Secretariat has proposed for the approval of the GB that the following directions to be developed the activities in 2006, as following:

- Continuing the preparation for participation in the Community Integrated Lifelong Learning Programme through capacity building measures
- Organizing thematic seminars on:
 - quality in education,
 - skills development and quality assurance in VET,
 - ICT in education,
 - other seminar based on the request of the ministries
- Organizing the SOM and GB meetings
- Increasing the visibility of activities developed within ERI SEE

The GB and CB members have agreed on the directions proposed for development in 2006 and on the topic of thematic seminars. The representatives of the ministries and the Consultative Body members have made the following proposals from the region:

- Seminar on mutual recognition of diplomas, with specific topics characteristic to the region
- Bologna follow-up activities
- Donors cooperation/coordination through learning process
- Developing the Lifelong learning strategies
- Teacher's role in the new European context

The instrument to be used in developing the activities for 2006 is the peer learning.

It has been agreed that the executive director of ERI SEE Secretariat should present the detailed 2006 working programme for the GB and CB members by Mid September 2005, and collect reactions by Mid October 2005.

3. Lobbying and fundraising issues

For ensuring the functioning of the Secretariat and for developing the activities to be included in the 2006-working programme the support of the donors is essential. The representatives of the donor countries expressed their interest to continue the support, in accordance with their financial and institutional rules, based on the ERI SEE working programme and finalization of the legislative and institutional process of Secretariat establishment.