

ERI SEE

**EDUCATION REFORM INITIATIVE
OF SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE**

Issue no. 3

May 2006

Welcome message



Dear colleagues,
On the 29th of April 2006, the ERI SEE Secretariat organised the fourth Governing Board and Consultative Body meeting in the Hague, in Netherlands, marking the continuity and sustainability of the activities promoted for regional co-operation in education, which

were initiated by the Task Force Education and Youth in 1999.

Since its establishment, the **ERI SEE** Secretariat acted as a regional platform for co-operation in the education area, serving as an interface between ongoing national reforms in South Eastern Europe and current trends and developments in the education sector at EU level.

The first annual report of **ERI SEE**, issued in December 2005, clearly indicated the importance of our projects and showed the interest of the experts and support received for their implementation. We have ambitious plans for 2006 and in this Newsletter you will find our main objectives. The programme of the Austrian Presidency of the European Council is of utmost importance for connecting the ministries of education from South Eastern Europe to the currently ongoing debates at European Union level.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all Governing Board and Consultative Body members for the support offered and for their commitment to enhance regional co-operation and promote the European dimension in the educational and training systems in South Eastern Europe.

Luminita Matei,
Executive director
ERI SEE Secretariat

In its revised Lisbon strategy and in the strategy for sustainable development, the European Union identified education and training as a crucial factor in addressing the need for more growth, sustainability and social cohesion in Europe – a challenge particularly present in the region of the Western Balkans. Sufficient investment in education and in the development of human resources is indeed paramount for the prosperity and common values of Europe. Education is also the key to the European future of the Western Balkan region.



Education is therefore a top priority in the Austrian EU Presidency. The Presidency concentrates on ways to enhance the contribution of education to the Lisbon goals, as well as on intensifying and speeding up the integration of the countries of the Western Balkans in the European area of education.

At the IX conference of European ministers of education held in Vienna on 16 and 17 March, the Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe was acknowledged as a main political instrument for regional cooperation and transfer of knowledge in the education field.

ERI SEE with its strong role in the process of integration of the region in the European area of education, is an example for a sustainable transfer of ownership to the region in a crucial area of activity of the Stability Pact such as education. The initiative is the main partner of the Task Force Education and Youth and is designated to increasingly take over its agendas.

In order to support the work of ERI SEE and the education reforms in the countries of the region, Austria initiated the “Pact for Education” for the Western Balkans. The “Pact” is a political initiative which aims at mobilising existing and initiating new commitments on EU level for fostering the European orientation of national education reforms and with this – for contributing to the EU integration process of the Western Balkan countries.

Mr. Anton Dobart,
Chair of the Task Force Education and Youth

ERI SEE – regional instrument for co-operation in the field of education in the South Eastern Europe

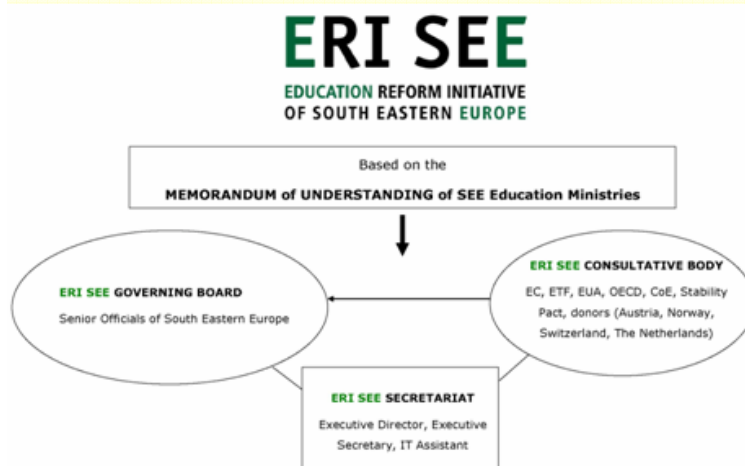
MISSION STATEMENT

The Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE) was launched in 2002 by the ministries of education and higher education from the South Eastern Europe as a regional platform for co-operation in the education area based on the Memorandum of Understanding signed by all ministries of education from the region. Education will play an important role for the countries in the region in the accession to and association with the EU. Therefore, the major aim of the ERI-SEE is to **support the integration process of South Eastern Europe into the wider European Area of Education** by promoting an exchange of experience between EU and SEE at political and expert level.

Within the framework of ERI-SEE the countries of South Eastern Europe have united their efforts to reform their education systems in accordance with the objectives set at European level as outlined in the EU “Detailed Work Programme on the follow-up of the objectives of education and training systems in Europe”, the “Bologna Process” and the “Bruges-Copenhagen Process”. This regionally-based initiative places a greater emphasis on ownership within and across the region and **enables the region to speak with one voice.**

The ERI-SEE:

- ◆ supports integration process of SEE into the wider European Area of Education
- ◆ promotes the harmonization of SEE education systems in line with EU standards;
- ◆ facilitates an exchange of experience between EU and SEE at political and expert level.
- ◆ ensures access to first-hand information on EU developments in education providing dissemination of knowledge by fostering examples of good practice.
- ◆ facilitates contacts between SEE countries and international organisations and institutions such as the OECD, Council of Europe, European Training Foundation, European University Association etc.



Its institutional structure consists of a Governing Board, a Consultative Body and a Secretariat. Members of the Governing Board are the representatives of the signatory Education Ministries of South Eastern Europe – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, PISG Kosovo, FYR of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia.

Through its Executive Director the Secretariat of ERI SEE is responsible for the implementation of the yearly Work Plans. These include activities like organisation and delivery of workshops, thematic seminars and training, study visits and twinning of institutions, also with the aim of creating and widening political and expert networks.

Special Guest

Messages

At the beginning of the 21st century South East European countries are looking for the best mechanisms to become members of the wide family of European countries. Along this road every SEE country has recognized the importance of education system in achieving its “European aim”.

Looking abroad and ahead SEE countries have also recognized that just if they act together, supporting exchange of knowledge and experiences among them, our education systems will contribute to the best alignment with the EU standards.

In this light ERI SEE Secretariat represents the best solution for exchange and improvements as well as the best evidence of taking over responsibilities for their future by South East European countries themselves.

Strongly believing that children are the most valuable part of each country Montenegro will continue to cooperate closely with all countries in the region in order to “open door” for the best future of our children, providing them with the highest quality education possible in the moment given.

Ivana Petricevic, vice Chair of the ERI SEE Governing Board



The Netherlands has been supporting the ERISSEE initiative since 2004 – when the Netherlands presided over the European Council. **The Minister of Education, Culture and Science, Maria van der Hoeven**, feels very strongly about the educational co-operation between the countries of South Eastern Europe: *“Europe nowadays is, in a sense, larger and more inclusive than ever before. The countries of South-Eastern Europe are closer to us than they were ever before. Yet much work remains to be done in all fields. Of these fields, education is very important. That is the main reason for ERISSEE’s importance”*.

We at CROSS/EVD were very pleased to act as hosts for an enthusiastic group of people representing the countries of South Eastern Europe.

As they say: “a wonderful time was had by all” and in the meantime we also learnt from this experience!

Linda Beijlsmit, Chair of the ERI SEE Consultative Body

Stability Pact Core Objective: Fostering and building Human Capital



STABILITY PACT
FOR SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE



The Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe is launching the **new core objective** on *“Fostering and Building Human Capital”* in Belgrade on the 29th of May 2006. This will promote

both education and research in the countries of South Eastern Europe.

The Stability Pact has been promoting Education and Youth-related issues ever since its inception through the Task Force on Education and Youth. The aim of this engagement was providing young people with better education, mobility and employment opportunities, recognizing that the key to regional stability and further democratization process lies in this area. It became clear that a greater engagement of the Stability Pact was needed to help promote the involvement of young people in Life-long Learning Programmes to help the building of human capital in South Eastern Europe.

ERI SEE has an important role to play in implementing this objective in South Eastern Europe. Through networking, exchange of information and experience, dissemination of good practice, organisation and delivery of seminars, training and workshops, ERI SEE will continue to serve as an interface between ongoing national reforms in South Eastern Europe and current trends and developments in the education sector at EU level.

More information can be found at: www.stabilitypact.org

Special topics:
IXth Conference of European Ministers of Education
“Strengthening Education in Europe”
Final Communiqué on the Outcome of Discussions on 17 March 2006
Vienna, Austria



The education systems and institutions in Europe today are confronted with the need to be competitive and to cooperate in a globalised society. At the same time, they should contribute to building a socially cohesive knowledge society.

In line with the emphasis of the Austrian EU Presidency on quality in education and following the tradition of regular meetings at ministerial level since 1997, the IX Conference of European Ministers of Education discussed the widening of the European Area of Education to the Western Balkans, and sought ways for strengthening education by enhancing its contribution to the re-launched Lisbon agenda for growth, employability and greater social cohesion in Europe.

The main themes in focus were the ongoing integration of the Western Balkan countries into the European Area of Education, the significance of qualification frameworks (European and national) for education reforms in a lifelong learning perspective, and the role of the universities for the reform agenda in South Eastern Europe as a point of synergy between education, research and innovation. The final communiqué is to be found at <http://www.bmbwk.gv.at/ministersconference>.

OECD Report on Education Policies for Students at Risk and those with Disabilities in South Eastern Europe

Education Policies for Students at Risk and those with Disabilities in South Eastern Europe provides detailed reports on special needs education policies in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, FYR of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia.

The findings serve as an analytical reference point and an encouragement for further action in this field. This OECD project is the first coherent inventory of national policies on special needs education since the disintegration of the former Republic of Yugoslavia and the armed conflicts in the region. The support for identification and implementation of education policies of ministries of education contributes to OECD's commitment to the aims and strategies of the Education Reform Initiative of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE). This book is part of the OECD project on Education Development for Students at Risk and those with Disabilities in South Eastern Europe and a follow-up to the *Reviews of National Policies for Education, South Eastern Europe* (OECD 2003), which called for increased attention to children and young people with special education needs. This OECD activity was made possible by grants from Finland, Norway, the Flemish Community of Belgium and the World Bank. Additional support was provided by Israel, the Austrian Ministry for Education, Science and Culture, and the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe.

The book is available in English and French, and sections will be also available in languages of South Eastern Europe.

Further information on the scope and activities of this project can be found on the OECD website at www.oecd.org/edu/nonmembereducation.



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