

ERI SEE

**EDUCATION REFORM INITIATIVE
OF SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE**

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ERI SEE

is a regional platform for cooperation in the educational area.



Our donors in 2005:

*Austria,
Croatia,
FYR of
Macedonia,
the Netherlands,
Norway,
Romania,
Switzerland*

Welcome message

Dear colleagues,

Following the decision of the ministers of education and higher education from South Eastern Europe, the ERI SEE Secretariat is a regional platform for cooperation in the education area, intended 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. According to the mandate received, the Secretariat of ERI SEE is responsible for the implementation of the annual programs adopted by the Governing Board within the overall objective of integrating SEE countries into the evolving Wider European Area of Education through networking, exchange of information and experience, dissemination of good practice, organisation and delivery of seminars, training, workshops etc. The first report of the activities developed by ERI SEE in 2005 is presented in this Newsletter and presents in synthesis what we achieved during this year. We also have ambitious plans for 2006 and you will find below our main objectives. The

programme of the Austrian Presidency of the European Council and the support offered to the region is of utmost importance for connecting the ministries of education from South Eastern Europe to the currently ongoing debates at European Union level. I would very much like to emphasize the fact that all these activities have been designed and implemented with the strong support from my colleagues from the Task Force Education and Youth and our donors from Austria, Croatia, FYR of Macedonia, the Netherlands, Norway, Romania and Switzerland. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank to all Governing Board and Consultative Body members for the support offered in 2005 and for their commitment to enhance regional cooperation and promote the European dimension in the educational and training systems from the South Eastern Europe.

Luminita Matei, executive director,

ERI SEESecretariat

Special Guest

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

Since 1999 the Task Force Education and Youth/Enhanced Graz Process facilitates education reforms in South Eastern Europe through regional and international networking. The commitment to a needs-based, genuinely regional approach helps adjust the work in accordance to the needs of the reform agenda and the changing significance of education and training. From a “tool for post-conflict stabilisation in a war-torn region” to a crucial factor in the pan-European effort of building a knowledge society – for the countries of South Eastern Europe, in particular of the Western Balkan region, education and training are now one of the keys needed to materialize their individual European perspective.

One of the main themes in the area of education of the Austrian EU Presidency in 2006 is the genuine and sustainable integration of South Eastern Europe in the Wider European Area of Education. A conference of European ministers of education taking place on 16 and 17 March 2006 in Vienna will therefore discuss recent developments and instruments towards strengthening education in Europe, also in the light of the European dimension of reforms



in the region of the Western Balkans.

The Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe is one of the main partners for Austria and the Task Force Education and Youth in preparing the participation of the Western Balkan countries in the March ministers conference. The institutionalised political network of ERI SEE and some of its main instruments (i. e. thematic workshops) made possible to have a regional discussion on subjects of increased significance for the education development in Europe. The results of these discussions, especially the ones concerning the European Qualifications Framework, the new generation of education programmes in LLL, as well as the higher education sector, represent a substantial contribution to the March ministers conference.

ERI SEE in 2005 - overview of the activities

During 2005, the activities of ERI SEE were focusing on capacity building measures in key areas of educational reform with a special focus on ongoing and future EU integration processes and with respect to the shared goals and objectives of the "Education and Training 2010". The Secretariat organized in 2005 a series of seminars and conferences in selected key areas, such as:

- Integrated Lifelong Learning Community programme
 - Higher education and Implementation of Bologna Process
 - Investing efficiently in education
- Important projects have been implemented by international organizations in the framework of ERI SEE, for example an ETF project supported by Italy on "Dissemination of Copenhagen Process", and a continuing OECD project on "Education Development for disabled and at risk students".

The international workshops on "Participation to the Community programmes in the fields of education and training-an important tool for European integration", organised in Bucharest, Romania 6-7 May 2005 and Sofia, Bulgaria, 30 September-1 October 2005.

The following objectives have been envisaged to be achieved during the workshops: to present to the experts from the region the ongoing Community programmes in the field of education and training- Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci and the structure and content of the proposed new Lifelong Learning (LLL) Programme, the administrative re-

quirements necessary for ensuring participation into the new programme, strategies to disseminate information related with Community programmes, sharing experiences and best practices, discussing the relevance of participating into the Community programmes and to reflect on the ways to develop national capacities for managing the integrated Community programme.

A number of 27 experts have attended the two workshops. We also benefited of the experience and expertise of invited experts from European Commission, Austria, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Task Force Education and Youth/Enhanced Graz Process, Stability Pact Office and the EC Delegation in Bucharest.

What we have achieved during the two seminars: there is a need for promoting awareness activities for the decision makers in the SEE on the preparation for participation to the LLL programme, the experts got information and training on project cycle management, team work and an active participation of the experts. The ERI SEE Secretariat collected best practices and experiences that have been shared and they are available on our website, draft action plans on dissemination and evaluation have been prepared and consistent information on the structure and operational aspects related to LLL programme presented.

- *Integrated Lifelong Learning Community programme*
- *Higher education and Implementation of Bologna Process*
- *Investing efficiently in education*

ERI SEE in 2005 - overview of the activities

ERI SEE Senior Officials, Governing Board and Consultative Body meetings,

27-28 May 2005, Podgorica, Montenegro and 24-25 November 2005, Ohrid, Macedonia

Two meetings of ERI SEE Senior Officials, Governing Board and Consultative Body meetings had been organised in 2005 on **27- 28 May 2005, in Podgorica, Montenegro** and 24-25 November 2005, in **Ohrid, Macedonia**.

During the meetings, it has been agreed on the objectives and working programme of ERI SEE in 2006, as well as financial support offered by several donors. Topics such as quality in education, European Qualifications Framework, OECD project on Education Development for Disabled and at Risk Students in Southeast Europe, ETF project on Disseminating Copenhagen Process have been presented and discussed during the Senior Officials Meeting.



“The Bologna Process after Bergen: the challenges of implementation”,

Bucharest, 1-2 July 2005

In accordance with the 2005 working programme, the ERI SEE Secretariat in partnership with the **European University Association (EUA)** and **UNESCO-European Centre for Higher Education (CEPES)** organised in Bucharest, on 1-2 July 2005, the thematic seminar **“The Bologna Process after Bergen: the challenges of implementation”**.

The topics of the seminar have been designed for the representatives of the ministries and higher education institutions from the South Eastern European countries, aiming to examine the forthcoming challenges faced by the higher education community in this region, respectively: the Bergen Declaration, Bologna Process and the status of implementation, study case: Croatia and Moldova, quality assurance, European and National Qualifications Framework, doctoral programmes and research, the social dimension in the EHEA.

The **conclusions** of the seminar refer to the following issues:

- It is important that ministries and higher education institutions from the SEE to be active in Bologna follow-up process
- There is a need to ensure support to the newly entered countries-such as Moldova
- It is advisable to increase cooperation in the region with the aim as bringing common problems and solutions in the discussion that are organised across Europe
- Monitoring of change and following implementation, due to governmental changes in the region
- Encouraging a broader debate on education, seen as an investment in the society

ERI SEE in 2005 - overview of the activities

key issues:

- ⇒ *strategies for managers, teachers and local authorities,*
- ⇒ *development of the financial mechanisms,*
- ⇒ *quality assurance system.*

Investing efficiently in education, 24-25 November 2005, Ohrid, Macedonia

Decentralisation was one of the main topics debated during the meeting. The experts participating to the seminar have agreed that without the political support and willingness of the Governments and local authorities, the process of decentralisation cannot be promoted. It is very important to combine decentralisation of the educational system with the reform of administration at local and national level. It is also important to work hard for changing mentalities and training of human resources involved in the process.

The implementation process is at different stages in each country, but there are some key issues that need to be followed and cooperation could be developed at regional level, such as: training strategies for managers, teachers and local authorities, development of the financial mechanisms as well as a quality assurance system.

ICT seminar in education, 2-3 December 2005, Zagreb, Croatia

The seminar was developed based on a proposal and support offered by Bureau Cross-the Netherlands. Representatives of the ministries of education signatory of the Memorandum of Understanding, as well as experts from the Netherlands, CISCO System and SIVCO attended the meeting.

As a general overview of the seminar, the following issues can be presented as results of the meeting:

- There are different stages of development of the ICT strategies – and based on experiences of the countries is easier to buy computers and software but it is hard to train and use the human resources in the most efficient way.
- The development of educational software is important for increasing the attractiveness of the subjects taught in the classroom and an important tool for the teaching
- Financing of the ICT strategies at national level is a problem that may jeopardize the success of the implementation process. Sustainability of the process is crucial for the success of the national programmes developed by the Ministries of education from the region. The *private-public partnership* developed with solid companies could be a solution in the region together with the support from the local authorities.

The role of teachers and teacher training in ICT are of utmost importance for the success of a national ICT a strategy.



ERI SEE in 2005 - overview of the activities

Expertise

In the process of implementing the 2005 working programme, the ERI SEE Secretariat benefited of the important support offered by international experts or representatives of ministries of education members of the Consultative Body. In this context, I would like to mention the Netherlands and Norway as well as the European Training Foundation, European University Association, UNESCO-CEPES, European Commission and Italy.

We consider all these contributions of utmost importance because it helped the ERI SEE Secretariat to achieve its mandate in 2005: "Through fostering regional co-operation and facilitating capacity building and know-how transfer, ERI SEE promotes common European standards in education, also in the light of the ongoing EU integration process of the region".

Preliminary results of ERI SEE activities

The ERI SEE Secretariat was preoccupied to receive the feedback from the experts attending our meetings on a range of issues, from content to organization. We have used a feedback questionnaire and the preliminary results indicate the following:

- ▶▶ It seems that almost all the participants were satisfied about the content of the training, delivery and overall added value of the training
- ▶▶ The ERI SEE Secretariat provided a good learning environment and the participants were satisfied with the presentations made during the workshops
- ▶▶ The training and information provided are useful for their professional activities.
- ▶▶ The topics chosen were included in the political agenda of the ministries of education from the SEE and are relevant for the educational reform
- ▶▶ Some of the participants to the capacity building activities for preparing participation to LLL programme have been nominated to deal with the negotiation for participation to LLL.

Important support offered by international experts from the Netherlands and Norway as well as the European Training Foundation, European University Association, UNESCO, European Commission and

Task Force Education and Youth

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

EQF should increase transparency and mutual trust, and hence ensure access to education and training by removing barriers between institutions and countries, as well as by facilitating both recognition of "foreign" qualifications and transfer of qualifications of individual citizens from one learning setting to another.

Expert Workshop —“Towards a European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning” Vienna, October 21st and 22nd

BACKGROUND

Lifelong Learning has become a necessity in a Europe characterized by rapid social, technological and economic change. Addressing the now visible need for continuous updating and renewal of knowledge, skills and wider competences is not possible without efficient communication and co-operation between education sectors, authorities, institutions and between countries.

In order to reach the Lisbon goals the EU Heads of Government requested at their meeting in Brussels in March 2005 the creation of a European Qualifications Framework supporting previous recommendations by Ministers of Education and Training both in the framework of the Bologna Process and the Copenhagen Process.

The EQF is envisaged as a meta-framework enabling qualification frameworks and systems at national and sectoral level to be related to each other. This should increase transparency and mutual trust, and hence ensure access to education and training by removing barriers between institutions and countries, as well as by facilitating both recognition of "foreign" qualifications and transfer of qualifications of individual citizens from one learning setting to another.

Considering the rich diversity of national education and training systems and their stages of

development, each country can therefore put in place a process whereby existing qualification structures and systems (whether a single national framework or system of qualifications, or various systems of qualifications) are linked to the EQF.

Based on inclusive consultation processes at the respective national levels EU member states are invited to comment on the proposed draft EQF concept at the end of 2005. The possible shape of the future EQF will be one of the key points of discussion in education and training at EU level in the coming years.

The Task Force Education and Youth of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, in close cooperation with the Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe, has therefore initiated a consultation process for SEE on the European Qualifications Framework. An expert workshop "Towards a European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning - Relevance, Feasibility and Implications for SEE" (Vienna, October 21st and 22nd 2005) offered a forum for a broad discussion on the topic. Participants were HE and VET experts from the SEE Ministries of Education, experts from EU member states, the European Training Foundation and the OECD, as well as from the European Commission.

Expert Workshop—“Towards a European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning” Vienna, October 21st and 22nd

At the last Ministerial Conference in Bergen in May 2005 the Ministers responsible for higher education agreed to adopt the overarching framework for qualifications in the European Higher Education Area and to elaborate National Frameworks for Qualifications and to have started work on this by 2007. This includes all countries of the region as well.

The development and implementation of National Qualifications Frameworks is widely seen as the “optimal approach” for linking national qualification systems to EQF. While being at different stages of development, most of the countries in SEE have already started discussion processes on the possible development of NQF. Equally, education development processes in most countries place increasing importance on learning outcomes rather than inputs

Thus the development of the EQF is also fully in line with education development processes in SEE providing a reference instrument for evolving NQFs.

Qualification Frameworks: Feasibility and Implementation Scenarios

Having this in mind and based on the sharing of experience, workshop participants highlighted the following prerequisites for the successful development and implementation of QFs:

- Designing and implementing a NQF should be based on structured and inclusive national consultation processes, involving

stakeholders from all relevant sectors in the society (going beyond VET and HE) and ensuring a broad public debate.

- The impetus for the development of QFs in Higher Education (framework of the Bologna Process) and VET offer the chance for a broader consensus and the establishment of national networks to intensive working on the development of respective NQFs.

- NQFs as well as the EQF must be/become useful to all members of society.

- All levels and level descriptors should be developed together and in agreement with the relevant stakeholders in order to avoid inconsistencies and overlaps, e.g. between VET and HE.

- The EQF is a transparency instrument but it also has the potential of becoming a driving force for change.

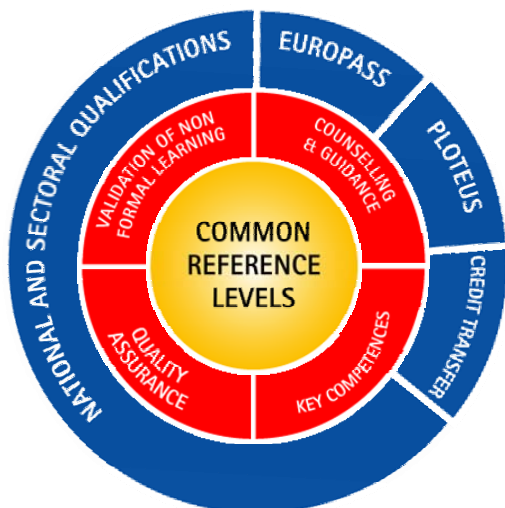
- Broad consensus on the purposes, needs and a strategy with regard to the general aims of the EQF and the national education policies is an important precondition for sustainable success.

- As the main aim of developing an EQF is to increase transparency, the priority is to include existing qualifications and to find their place in the system. This will in some cases lead to a review and the development of new qualifications.

In the processes of establishing an NQF close links to mechanisms/systems of quality assurance are important.

Workshop Conclusions

Expert Workshop—“Towards a European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning” Vienna, October 21st and 22nd



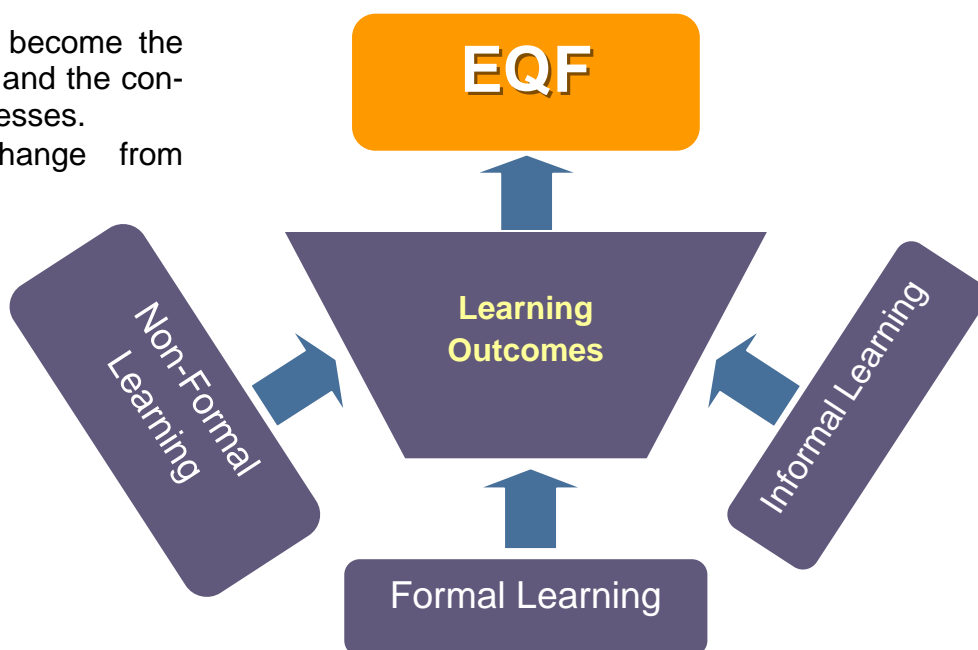
Focus on Learning Outcomes and Its Implications for the Learning Process

The focus on learning outcomes is an approach which is part of the reform process in SEE and other parts of Europe. The emphasis in the EQF is thus coherent with the developments in the region. However, this change of focus from input to outcomes will necessitate further changes in the organisation of learning processes and the assessment of their outcomes. The following development needs were highlighted:

- Learning outcomes need to become the basis for curriculum development and the content of teaching and learning processes.
- The role of teacher will change from

“instructors” to facilitators of learning processes for the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competencies. In order to enable teachers to fulfil this new role the importance of new forms of qualifying teachers and the need for school based development were highlighted. Learning outcomes introduce greater objectivity in the assessment process and make more transparent what is learned and achieved. At the same time the learning outcomes approach makes the assessment process more complicated to design, i.e. the assessment of personal competencies. New forms of monitoring and quality assurance would hence depend on institutional and procedural reforms such as the establishment of new forms of inspectorates and creating new guidelines for evaluation.

Sustainable change needs time. Qualification Frameworks while being a valuable lever for reform generate institutional challenges. Hence, development and implementation of NQFs and their alignment to the EQF must be seen as a long-term, non-linear process.



Expert Workshop—“Towards a European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning” Vienna, October 21st and 22nd

Priorities for Development

To support the above outlined developments the expert meeting identified the following priorities:

Awareness raising and commitment

To be able to move forward in the process, the SEE countries need strong commitment by Ministries, Government and Social Partners involved in the effort of establishing EQF-compatible national qualification frameworks – respective activities such as awareness raising campaigns, etc. need to be considered.

Common language and terminology

As terminology and concepts vary from language to language, respectively country to country further steps should be taken to clarify key concepts and terminology used in the EQF consultation process.

Making use of already existing structures and processes

In developing QFs and promoting reform initiatives existing structures and processes should be used (e.g. National BFUGs, Bologna Promoters, etc.).

Capacity Building Measures

Valuable experience in the development and implementation of QFs is already available at European, regional and international level. Peer learning and provision of technical expertise at regional level through networks for regional cooperation like ERI SEE or the European Training Foundation play an important role. Lessons learned from international evaluations, e.g., the 2005 Scottish evaluation and the 2005 South African evaluation may provide useful insights into the implementation of QFs.

Funding/Financial Assistance

As EQF/NQF refers to all sectors of education, financial resources will be needed to support successful implementation processes – both from national as well as international sources. It is therefore vital that funding instruments of the European Commission will be available for the implementation of QFs in the life long learning perspective including the relevant interfaces. It will be important to draw attention of national governments as well as the European Commission to the fact that the participation of the SEE countries in the new LLL programme will not eliminate the need for special ‘assistance funding’ for education reforms in the region.

*Priorities for
Development*

*Forthcoming
events*

- 📅 What do we plan for the first semester of 2006?
- 📅 The third international seminar on preparing the participation into the Community Integrated Lifelong Learning Programme through capacity building measures, 1-5 March 2006, Sinaia, Romania
- 📅 The second seminar on "Promoting the use of ICT in education for teaching and learning", March 2006
- 📅 The fourth Senior Officials, Governing Board and Consultative Body meetings, the Hague, 25-28 April, 2006
- 📅 The follow up seminar on EQF, June 2006, Bulgaria



Special event

Conference of the ministers of education, Vienna, 16-17 March 2006

**“Widening and Strengthening European Education“
Conference of the European Ministers of Education**

The participation of the Western Balkan countries in the wider European Area of Education (EAE) is a priority theme of the Austrian EU Presidency in 2006. Apart from the very successful cooperation within the Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE) this topic will be most prominently dealt within the framework of the conference of European Ministers of Education in Vienna on 17th of March 2006. The Conference will concentrate on topics of immediate and mid-term relevance for EAE and the education sector in both EU and non-EU countries, including the region of the Western Balkans.

Under the motto of the Austrian Presidency “Quality is the objective” one would aim at finding ways for enhancing quality and efficiency as prerequisite for achieving the Lisbon goals. On 16 March the Conference will be preceded by an informal meeting of EU Ministers of Education. It will offer the possibility for exchange of experiences from the national consultation processes on the European Qualifications Framework and

will open a discussion on enhancing the quality of the tertiary sector as an interface between education, research and innovation for growth and jobs. The participating countries in the informal meeting will be the EU Member States as well as the EEC, accession and candidate countries,

The emphasis on 17 March will be in particular on the contribution of the European Qualifications Framework and the role of the universities for building up a knowledge society in Europe, as well as for widening and strengthening the European Area of Education. On 17 March the conference will be joined by Switzerland and the countries from the Western Balkan region.

The conference will underline the important role education and regional cooperation play for supporting the European perspective of political and education reforms in the region of the Western Balkans.

During one year of activities and benefiting of the support and experience gained within the Task Force Education and Youth/Enhanced Graz Process, a strong ERI SEE team has been built, demonstrating that it is possible to develop sustainable regional cooperation in the field of education and training.

ERI SEE consists of:

ERI SEE Team

Governing Board members – one representative from each ministry signatory of the Memorandum of Understanding, respectively:

- ◆ Mr. Radovan Fuchs, Chair of the Board, Vice-Minister, Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports
- ◆ Ms. Ivana Petricevic, Vice-Chair, senior adviser, Montenegrin Ministry of Education and Science
- ◆ Mr. Mihaylo Milovanovitch, Vice-Chair, Task Force Education and Youth
- ◆ Ms. Adriana Gjonaj, secretary of state, Albanian Ministry of Education and Science
- ◆ Ms. Aida Duric, senior adviser, Bosnian Ministry of Civil Affairs
- ◆ Ms. Rossitza Velinova, head of office, Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science
- ◆ Mr. Rexhaj Xhavit, head of department, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, PISG-Kosovo
- ◆ Mr. Zoran Popovski, secretary of state, Macedonian Ministry of Education and Science
- ◆ Ms. Sofia Cusnir, head of department, Moldovan Ministry of Education
- ◆ Ms. Madlen Serban, director, National Centre for VET, Romanian Ministry of Education and Research
- ◆ Ms. Vesna Fila, vice-minister, Serbian Ministry of Education and Sports

Consultative Body members, composed by representatives of the donors- ministries and international institutions:

- ⇒ Mr. Anton Dobart, Chair of the Task Force Education and Youth, Austrian Ministry of Education, Culture and Science
- ⇒ Ms. Monika Mott, head of department, KulturKontakt, Austria
- ⇒ Mr. Gennady Kosyak, Council of Europe
- ⇒ Mr. Arjen Vos, head of department, European Training Foundation
- ⇒ Mr. David Crosier, European University Association
- ⇒ Mr. Ian Whitman, head of Programme for Co-operation with Non Member Economies, OECD
- ⇒ Gerhard Kowar, OECD
- ⇒ Ms. Linda Beiljsmit, director of Bureau Cross on behalf of the Dutch Ministry of Education and Research, the Netherlands
- ⇒ Ms. Torlaug Aukrust, senior adviser, Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research
- ⇒ Ms. Therese Adam, head of division, DEZA, Switzerland

Director of the ERI SEE
Secretariat

Ms. Luminita Matei,
executive director

**Task Force Education and Youth/
Enhanced Graz Process**

Mr. Anton Dobart, Chair
Ms. Barbara Weitgruber, vice chair
Mr. Mihaylo Milovanovitch
Ms. Kristina Janjic
Ms. Claudia Kragulj

**Translation in Serbian, Macedonian and Albanian of the EU documents:
Towards a European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning",
"Establishing an Integrated Action Programme in the Field of Lifelong learning"**

http://www.see-educoop.net/portal/id_bruges.htm

European Union Relevant Documents:

Web-portal Growth and Jobs (Lisbon-Process):

<http://europa.eu.int/growthandjobs/index.htm>

**Communication to the Spring European Council: Working together for Growth
and Job- A new start for the Lisbon Strategy (May 2005)**

http://europa.eu.int/growthandjobs/pdf/COM2005_024_en.pdf

**Commission Staff Working Document in support of the Spring European Council,
22-23 March 2005, on the Lisbon Strategy of economic, social and environmental
renewal (January 2005)**

http://europa.eu.int/growthandjobs/pdf/SEC2005_160_en/pdf

**Commission Staff Working Paper: Progress towards the Lisbon
Objectives 2005 report**

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/doc/progressreport05.pdf>

Facing the Challenge ("Kok Report", November 2004)

http://europa.eu.int/growthandjobs/pdf/kok_report_en.pdf

Maastricht Communique

http://www.vetconference-maastricht2004.nl/pdfMaastricht_Communique.pdf

Work Programme of the European Commission Strategic Objectives 2005-2009

http://europa.eu.int/comm/off/work_programme/index_en.htm

Next steps in implementing the revised Lisbon Strategy

http://europa.eu.int/growthandjobs/pdf/SEC2005_622_en.pdf

Useful links

Contact ERI SEE

You can find more information about our activities using our website:

www.erisee.org

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