

# ERI SEE

## EDUCATION REFORM INITIATIVE OF SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE

### Work Plan 2006

#### 1. JUSTIFICATION

The Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE) is a regional platform for co-operation in the education area. It is 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. 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.

As decided by the Senior Officials of the signatory ministries and the Governing Board members, the Secretariat of ERISSEE will be 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.

#### 2. OBJECTIVES OF ERISSEE IN 2006

##### *2.1. Preparation for participation in the Community Integrated Lifelong Learning Programme through capacity building measures: Continuation of the training of experts and consultancy*

###### Background

At European level, the European Commission has put forward for the approval of the Council and the Parliament, a proposal for a decision on the new Lifelong Learning integrated programme (LLL programme), which includes the Western Balkans countries among the participating countries and allows a participation of third countries in the partnerships developed within different projects. The proposal is currently being debated in the European Parliament's committees and within EU advisory bodies.

As regards the participation of the Western Balkans countries in the programme, this is pending on the stipulations of the Stabilisation and Association Agreements and the negotiations between the EU and the countries in the region.

For supporting the awareness and for creating a network of trained experts, in 2005, the ERI SEE Secretariat has organised two international workshops dedicated to the topic of LLL programme. From the content point of view, the focus was on basic information on the structure and

mechanism that are covering Community programmes as well as institutional arrangements necessary for managing Community funds at national level.

The seminars indicated a serious interest of the ministries of education from the SEE for participating into the Community programmes for education and training and the commitment of ERI SEE donors and the acceding countries (Bulgaria and Romania) to support the national efforts for participation.

### Activities proposed:

Following the results of the workshops organised in Bucharest and Sofia in 2005, the following types of activities are proposed to be developed in 2006:

#### 2.1.1. Information on the new Lifelong Learning Community programme addressing decision makers from the ministries of education, by:

- Disseminating the text of the proposal/decision and the translation in the languages of the region, using the ERI SEE website- [www.erisee.org](http://www.erisee.org)
- Issuing and distributing the ERI SEE electronic Newsletter explaining the main activities to be financed, administrative conditions to be fulfilled and other aspects regarding the programme
- Elaborating and distributing a CD with all the presentations and best practices collected during the two workshops that had been organised in 2005
- Cooperation with the Romanian and Bulgarian agencies for disseminating good practices, including materials they are producing ( Newsletter, CD's, video's, other materials)

#### 2.1.2. Two follow-up training seminars on capacity building measures

The target group is composed by the representatives of the ministries of education from the SEE that had been participated into the 2005 training seminars of ERI SEE.

The topics that are proposed for 2006 envisaged a follow-up on the content of the seminars implemented in 2005. In this respect, we consider important to approach the following issues:

- Evaluation of projects, including the following phases: selection of national experts (criteria, application forms, selection phase), evaluation formats- examples of current format used for decentralised measures under Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci project
- How to work with the European Commission and colleagues from the other European agencies: main principles that govern the relationship with the European Commission as stipulated in the draft proposal, how to get support from the other agencies
- Monitoring the project, an important tool for success: which are the practices already used within Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci, principles for developing national models for monitoring
- Continuing on basic training on Project Cycle Management- important for dissemination and training of potential promoters at national level

The seminars will benefit of expertise of experts from countries already participating into the Community programmes in the field of education and training.

The events will be organised in the region and we count on the support of the ministries of education.

### 2.1.3. Other instruments:

- Study visits organised by different national agencies implementing Community programmes;

For developing the administrative capacity necessary to manage to Community funds is important to have the opportunity to visit the agencies that are already implementing the programmes. Small teams composed of representatives of countries from the SEE will have the possibility to visit agencies and discussed the concrete issues related to the preparation for participation into the LLL programme.

In this context, we envisaged to cooperate with the agencies from Romanian and Bulgaria and from other countries that are willing to support.

We propose the teams to be composed of maximum 5 experts/study visits, experts that are to be selected based on a transparent competition. The ERI SEE Secretariat is proposing the following mechanism to be applied:

- ✚ A Call for proposal to be launched on the ERI SEE website. The text and the documents included in the call are prior to be approved by the Governing Board. The Call includes: the text detailing the objectives, conditions of participation, deadline as well as the application forms.

- ✚ An independent selection committee is nominated by the Governing Board in cooperation with the Consultative Body members and consists of representatives of the receiving agencies, as well as international experts nominated by the donors

- ✚ The final list of participants as well as a reserve list is to be published on ERI SEE website and communicated to participants

- ✚ The final agenda of the study visits is to be agreed between the ERI SEE Secretariat and the national agencies

- ✚ At the end of the visit, the participant has to submit to ERI SEE Secretariat a report as well as an evaluation form.

- National workshops for disseminating the information and project pipeline;

The ERI SEE Secretariat will cooperate with international or national institutions for disseminating the information on Community programmes in the field of education and training. In this respect, the ERI SEE Secretariat will provide the documents and other materials elaborated during the seminars organised.

The ERI SEE Secretariat is proposing a call for application for supporting the national authorities (ministries of education or other institutions with responsibilities in the field) for organising disseminating seminars or contact seminars, by finding an international expert as a speaker during the seminar. As a mechanism to be applied we propose the following:

- ✚ A Call for proposal to be launched on the ERI SEE website. The text and the documents included in the call are prior to be approved by the Governing Board. The Call includes: the text detailing the objectives, conditions of participation, deadline as well as the application forms.

- ✚ An independent selection committee is nominated by the Governing Board in cooperation with the Consultative Body members
  - ✚ The final list of participants as well as a reserve list is to be published on ERI SEE website and communicated to the institutions
  - ✚ The reports of the events as well as other materials are to be published on the ERI SEE website.
- Consultancy by countries with experience in the participation in the community programmes for national decision makers;

The ERI SEE Secretariat is encouraging the donor countries and our partners to offer consultancy to the ministries of education in the process of negotiating and preparation for their participation into the LLL.

## 2.2 European Qualifications Framework- National Qualifications Framework in the SEE

### Background

The Commission Staff Working Document *“Towards a European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong learning”* outlines the main features of a possible future European Qualifications Framework (EQF). EU Heads of Government at their meeting in Brussels in March 2005 requested the creation of an EQF, thus supporting and strengthening previous recommendations (February and December 2004) made by the Ministers of Education and Training.

As stated in the document, the EQF would be developed and implemented on a voluntary basis, not entailing any legal obligations. It is envisaged as a meta-framework increasing transparency and supporting mutual trust. It would thereby enable qualifications frameworks and systems at national and sectoral level to be related to each other – thus facilitating the transfer and recognition of the qualifications of individual citizens.

An EQF would consist of three main elements:

- The core would be a set of common reference points – referring to learning outcomes-located in a structure of 8 levels.
- These reference levels would be supported by a range of tools and instruments addressing the need of individual citizens.
- An EQF would also include a set of common principles and procedures providing guidelines for co-operation between stakeholders at different levels – in particular focussing on quality assurance, validation, guidance and key competences.

From the point of view of an EQF, the optimal approach would be that each country set up a single National Framework of Qualifications and link this single National Framework to the EQF. Considering the rich diversity of national education and training systems and their stages of development, each country should 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.

An EQF would also provide a common reference point to guide and inform developments of education, training and learning at sector level. Where possible, these sectoral developments should be linked to national frameworks – thus facilitating transfer and compatibility. The EQF common reference would also make it possible to link sector initiatives to national qualifications and thus facilitate transfer and compatibility. Linking a sectoral framework to the EQF furthermore implies an acceptance of, and a commitment to, a set of criteria regarding quality and transparency. The decision on linking sectoral initiatives to the possible EQF should be made by the stakeholders themselves, in consultation with representatives of national authorities responsible for qualifications.

### Activities proposed:

2.2.1. Informing the ministries of education on the results of the consultation process in Europe as well as on the developments in several European countries and at the European Union level

- Facilitating the access to documents and good practices using the ERI SEE website: [www.erisee.org](http://www.erisee.org)
- Continuing the practice of Senior Official Meetings to invite experts/representatives of the EU Presidency and European Training Foundation to share their experiences and the results of their activities
- Making available through website – best practice area, documents and reports of meetings organised on this topic at European level

2.2.2. Organising regional seminars (experts and policy makers) for informing on the EU developments, sharing good practices and instruments

- Facilitating participation of the SEE experts from higher education and other international experts to the event organised by the Romanian Agency for Cooperation between Universities and Socio-Economic Environment in July 2006 on the topic of higher education and EQF
- Organising a thematic seminar as follow up of Vienna workshop and as a consequence of the ministerial meeting organised under the auspices of the Austrian Presidency

2.2.3 Cooperating with international donors and European institutions that are developing projects on this topic in the SEE, for making available the results (or preliminary results) of their activities) using the ERI SEE website and ERI SEE electronic Newsletter.

## 2.3 Thematic Expert Seminars

### 2.3.1. Quality in education

#### Background

At the European level there is a lot of preoccupation on ensuring quality of education at all levels. Debates are undertaken at different levels and instruments have been designed by EU member states. The Austrian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, in the first semester of 2006 is considering the quality assurance in education as one of the priorities.

### Activities to be developed

The ERI SEE Secretariat intends to follow the developments at EU level, by:

#### 2.3.1.1 Informing the ministries of education on the debates that are undergoing at the European level

- Facilitating the access to documents and good practices using the ERI SEE website: [www.erisee.org](http://www.erisee.org)
- Continuing the practice of Senior Official Meetings to invite representatives of the EU Presidency to share their experiences and results
- Cooperation with the European Training Foundation and the European Commission to support the information process
- Making available through website – best practice area, the tools/projects and instruments applied in quality assurance and skills development in the countries from the region.

#### 2.3.1.2. Organising a thematic seminar on “Assessment and evaluation” – an important tool for ensuring quality in education with the support of CITO-the Netherlands.

The thematic seminar envisaged to facilitate the discussion among the SEE experts on the European debates and concepts (e.g. learning outcomes, transparency, and transferability), national and European experience as well as on the main principles of assessment and evaluation in the new European context.

### 2.3.2. Quality Assurance in VET

#### Background

Quality in VET is essential for the success of the reforms in the SEE and represents one of the keys issues in the debates organised at EU level. In this context, preparation of the SEE countries for implementing objectives included in the Copenhagen-Maastricht process, by facilitating peer learning processes at regional level is very important.

Based on the expertise of several donors and complementary to ETF efforts in the region, the ERI SEE Secretariat intends to support regional co-operation on the themes of skills development and quality in VET on a sector bases.

#### Activities to be developed

2.3.2.1. Facilitating information of SEE ministries representatives on the projects/programmes developed at European level,

2.3.2.2. Lobbying for participation of the SEE experts in the international meetings having this topic, supporting the organisers to identify the SEE experts

2.3.2.3. Organising a regional seminar (experts and policy makers) for informing on the EU developments, building a regional network of expert in QA in VET, following the model developed at European level, sharing good practices and instruments

### 2.3.3. ICT in education

#### Background

In 2005, with the support of the Bureau CROSS, on behalf of the Dutch Ministry of Education and Science, the ERI SEE Secretariat will organise in December 2005 a thematic seminar on the topic of ICT in education. The ministers of education and higher education from the SEE have stressed the importance of using ICT in education. Programmes for enhancing ICT use in educational institutions are in progress in the countries of the region.

Based on the interest and expertise of countries such the Netherlands, the ERI SEE Secretariat is proposing to continue to organise at regional level a thematic seminar with the objectives to: continue the debates on the national experiences, strategies and action plans for teacher training in ICT and the role of ICT in education.

### 2.4 Cooperation with OECD

ERI SEE will continue to co-operate with OECD on the project "Education Development for Students at Risk and those with Disabilities", financed by the World Bank, Norway and the Flemish Community of Belgium. Based on the findings of the Country Policy Reviews (to be published by OECD in February 2006), concrete follow-up activities for 2006 will be identified by country administrators on the occasion of a seminar on statistics and indicators in Paris (December 5 and 6, 2005) and funded from the OECD budget. ERI SEE will continue to offer its information network for dissemination of project results.

ERI SEE will also offer upcoming Meetings of Senior officials from Southeast Europe to exchange information on ongoing 2006 PISA activities in Southeast Europe (currently underway in Bulgaria, Croatia, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia).

### 2.5 Organising the Senior Officials meetings

The Senior Official meetings should continue to take place twice a year jointly with the GB meeting with the aim to raise awareness of the decision makers from the ministries of education on the new developments of EU level, projects implemented at regional level, support for national reform developments.

### 2.6 Organising the Governing Board and Consultative Body meetings

In accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding, twice a year the GB and CB meetings will be organised by the Secretariat.

## **2.7 Increasing the visibility of activities developed within ERI SEE**

In order to increase the visibility of the activities undertaken under the framework of ERISSEE, with the support of the Task Force Education and Youth and the Stability Pact Office we consider important the continuation of the lobby activities with donors, international organisations, ministries of education or other institutions interested in supporting educational reform in the SEE and to ask for the support of the GB members in this process.

Important instruments to support this objective are also:

- Issuing ERI SEE electronic Newsletters (two times per year)
- Finalising the development of our website: [www.erisee.org](http://www.erisee.org)