

Higher Education Working Group (HEWG)
Enhanced Graz Process - Task Force Education and Youth, Stability Pact

Extended Meeting

In connection with the launch of the UNESCO-CEPES Stability Pact project
“Regional University Network on Governance and Management
of Higher Education in South East Europe”

Venue:

“Audienzsaal ”, Minoritenplatz 5, 1010 Vienna

21 March 2002

Final report

The 3rd meeting of the Higher Education Working Group (HEWG), one of six thematic expert groups within the Stability Pact’s Task Force on Education and Youth (Enhanced Graz Process), was held in Vienna on 21 March 2002. The meeting was organised with extended participation, in connection with the launch of the UNESCO-CEPES Stability Pact project “Regional University Network on Governance and Management of Higher Education in South East Europe”.

The extended meeting was hosted by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture, with financial support for participants from the Stability Pact target countries provided by the Innovation Fund of the Enhanced Graz Process and the Higher Education Support Program (HESP) of the Open Society Institute. The HEWG is very grateful to these institutions for their generous support which made the meeting possible.

Participants included an equal proportion of representatives from higher education institutions and organisations from South Eastern Europe and of representatives from other European partner organisations. Please see the attached list of participants for details (Annex 1). The meeting was chaired by Lewis Purser (EUA) and Liviu Matei (CEU), as coordinators of the HEWG. The meeting agenda is in Annex 2.

The objectives of the meeting were to:

- review activities implemented in the framework of the HEWG’s action plan of September 2000;
- identify possible synergies in HE activities and policies across the SEE region;
- facilitate support for these synergies, using the HEWG as a platform in the spirit of the Stability Pact.

Participants were welcomed by the Chair of the Task Force Education and Youth, Dr. Anton Dobart, who provided an update on the work of the Enhanced Graz Process. Now that most of the original quick-start projects have been implemented, it is necessary to move forward into longer-term reform of HE systems across the region, and to promote sustainable regional co-operation in this field. The OECD thematic reviews (8 now finalised, 2 more on their way) and the conferences held in Serbia and Montenegro in early 2002 and to be held in Croatia in May 2002 and Kosovo in June 2002 are paving the way for such longer-term systems-level

reform. This reform should also be seen in the framework of the Stabilisation and Accession Process bringing the candidate countries of SEE closer to the EU. More specifically for higher education, the European-wide Bologna Process is also an important incentive for the HE reform process in SEE.

Mr. Dionyssios Kyvetos then gave an update from the Stability Pact Office, also mentioning the need for enhanced complementarity with the EU Stabilisation and Accession Process, as well as increased ownership of Stability Pact activities by the target countries themselves. He mentioned the 5 or 6 priority objectives identified by the new Special Coordinator Dr. Erhard Busek, to be achieved by the end of 2002, in the fields of trade and investment, infrastructure, refugee issues, cross-border co-operation, small arms and light weapons, and organised crime. The need for effective and open education systems is implicit in order to ensure the success of these objectives on a sustainable basis, and the Special Coordinator has recently repeatedly underlined the importance of education within the Stability Pact structures.

The HEWG then reviewed the progress of projects included in the Action Plan of September 2000. A brief update on these projects can be found in Annex 3. It was seen that despite the lack of any specific call for higher education projects in the Stability Pact framework, certain progress was achieved by the HEWG by developing regional co-operation and making good use of existing partnerships and donor programmes.

The representatives of a number of target countries made brief presentations of current Higher Education policy developments in their countries and HE systems.

- Marija Tasheva presented the current higher education law in Macedonia, highlighting some of the weak aspects of this law, and making some proposals for change, in order for this legislation to become more applicable and reform-oriented. HEWG members also offered experience from other countries such as Bosnia-Herzegovina and Bulgaria. However, the unclear links of the Macedonian HE reform process to the Bologna Process were noted. The institutional evaluation project for Macedonian higher education institutions was also presented by Bozin Donevski.
- Jens Vang and Dukagjin Pupovci presented the principles of the proposed new HE law in Kosovo, and mentioned the accreditation agency which will be set up and will include foreign members. This HE law and the interim statute of the University of Prishtina both include a clause prohibiting any kind of discrimination. The official establishment of the University of North Kosovo on 14 February 2002 was also announced. This university will be based in Mitrovica and will offer studies in Slavic languages. Funds have been pledged for this university, and programmes are underway. A report was made on the implementation of the Bologna Declaration at the University of Prishtina, including the importance of developing new skills in university management and strategic development.
- Edmond Hajderi stated that the Bologna Declaration now provides the main framework for the planned HE reform in 2003 in Albania, including the introduction of the BA/MA structures. The quality assurance and evaluation process is also in its early stages, and a call was made for common standards and procedures across the SEE region. ECTS is being implemented and a NARIC office established. A request was also made for the issue of recognition of HE degrees to be addressed across the region.
- From Bosnia-Herzegovina, a report was made regarding the main legal obstacles facing the reform process, including the lack of any country-wide common legal framework and the on-going structural problems regarding the legal status of individual Faculties. The Higher Education Coordinating Board is now functioning and beginning to address issues

of joint concern. Universities are now receiving funds from the World Bank education development project, for developing institutional plans and policies.

- Bojka Djukanovic mentioned that the final draft of the new HE law in Montenegro is now being reviewed, and that this is oriented towards the Bologna Process. The priority for the University of Montenegro now is quality assurance, and a number of projects are in preparation. The suggestion was made to ensure the compatibility of HE legislation across the region, before these laws are passed.
- Srbijanka Turajlic listed the main new elements of the HE law in Serbia which should be approved in early April, including the creation of a national commission for HE as a buffer body, the formalised representation of students and governmental representatives (16% each) on university councils, and incentives to shorten degrees and introduce ECTS, as part of a general move towards the Bologna Process. Ivan Juranic confirmed this move, mentioning the working groups looking at university reform, the institutional evaluation process now underway at all 5 universities, and the development of post-graduate and multidisciplinary studies.

A general discussion was held on the issue of corruption in HE across the region, and the different forms this can take. A good paper had been produced on this issue by the Students' Union of Serbia. It was agreed that, in order to tackle this problem, there was a strong need to promote ethical standards and improve the transparency of the HE systems, and that the introduction of modern reforms would help reduce the opportunities for such corruption.

Based on the above, it was agreed that the following five areas were of importance across the region, and that useful experience and support could be gained, at both institution and system level, by increased regional co-operation in these fields:

- **Legislation**
- **University structures, with faculties as constituent parts of one legal institution**
- **Quality assurance**
- **ECTS**
- **Ethical standards and transparency**

Work in these fields is necessary in all countries and systems across the SEE region, in order to ensure closer integration with the Bologna Process. HEWG members were encouraged to see how all projects could take these fields into account in relevant ways. It was suggested that smaller workshops between SEE and other European universities would be useful in addressing these fields. Several of these will be covered by the UNESCO-CEPES Stability Pact project "Regional University Network on Governance and Management of Higher Education in South East Europe".

The representatives of a number of Stability Pact HE donor organisations made brief presentations of their current support for Higher Education.

- The Norwegian Co-operation Programme for South East Europe has approved 18 projects, with guaranteed funding up to 2004. The challenge is now to link these to other international projects, e.g. in the field of HE management. <http://www.siu.no/southeast>
- The German Rectors' Conference (HRK), whose support is concentrated on projects of cross-border co-operation such as BRIE ("Bulgarian-Romanian inter-university centre for Europe") in Rousse and Giurgiu, and the Skoder Lake project between Albania and Montenegro, curriculum development in Subotica in partnership with Szeged and Timisoara, and hardware for the central laboratory at the University of Prishtina and for universities in Serbia. <http://www.hrk.de/> see "Südosteuropa".

- The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), which supports SEE regional networks of universities with a German academic partner, and also provides support for student study in Germany. http://www.daad.de/magazin/stipendien_programme/stip_index.html
- The Open Society Institute programmes, notably the Faculty Development Programme http://www.osi.hu/hesp/pr_southeast.html, student-led initiatives for reform and co-operation <http://www.osi.hu/hesp/pracs.html>, the curriculum resource centre at the Central European University <http://www.ceu.hu/crc/>, support for the SEE University in Tetovo and Roma support through national strategies. Support is also available for technical co-operation between countries in transition: <http://www.osi.hu/easteast/>. OSI education and youth initiatives in the SEE region are coordinated through OSEP-SEE (Open Society Education Programs – South East Europe) in Ljubljana, which also provides technical support as needed. Email: osep-see@zavod-irc.si. For full OSI details, please also see <http://www.osi.hu>.
- CEEPUS (Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies) <http://www.adis.at/ceepus/> continues to promote academic mobility and networking.
- World University Service – Austrian Committee continues to promote human resources development, academic infrastructure development, information and counselling services, publication and focal co-operation activities <http://www.wus-austria.org>

At the end of the meeting, other projects of relevance to SEE were also presented:

By the University of Shkoder: a project on university management and a project on laboratory infrastructure, m-hoti@albnet.net

By the University of Belgrade: a project with the Universities of Rome and Sarajevo on humanitarian aid and international law, jurani@rect.bg.ac.yu

By the Black Sea University Foundation: the five sea academy of international studies and partnership and the conflict prevention studies centre, bseau@rnc.ro

By UNESCO-CEPES: a study on the brain drain and the academic and intellectual labour market in SEE, d.parlea@cepes.ro

By the Council of Europe: in the framework of the Bologna Process, continued work in the field of academic recognition, and a project on higher education and tolerant societies, villano.qiriazzi@coe.int

By way of conclusion, a renewed mission for the HEWG was proposed:

1. To feed the Stability Pact Task Force Education and Youth with relevant HE issues.
2. To address more actively HE reform across SEE, in the five priority areas identified above.

Given the volunteer aspects of HEWG participation and the lack of any structures, HEWG should remain a spontaneous and ongoing process, serving a wide network of regional actors and as a reference point for identifying and sharing relevant expertise and experience.

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List of Participants

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The following persons were, at the last minute, unable to attend the meeting

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Annotated agenda

Objective: to identify possible synergies in HE activities and policies across the SEE region, and to facilitate support for these synergies, using the HEWG as a platform in the spirit of the Stability Pact.

- 11.00: Welcome from the Chair of the Task Force Education and Youth: Anton Dobart
Introduction from HEWG Coordinators: Lewis Purser, Liviu Matei
Update from the Stability Pact Office: Dionyssios Kyvetos
Update from the Enhanced Graz Process – Task Force Education and Youth: Gerhard Kowar
- 11.30: Review of activities since the 2nd meeting of the HEWG in September 2000:
(brief presentations by representatives of all projects included in the Action Plan of September 2000)
Discussion on the effects of these activities at regional, system and institutional levels.
- 13.00: Buffet lunch, offered by the Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture.
- 14.00: Current Higher Education policy developments in countries and systems.
(presentations by representatives of target countries)
Discussion on how the HEWG can facilitate and support these developments.
- 15.00 Current Higher Education support programmes in the framework of the Stability Pact.
(brief presentations by representatives of Stability Pact HE donor organisations)
Discussion on possibilities for European and regional cooperation.
- 16.00: Coffee break
- 16.30: Other SEE regional HE projects with or without Stability Pact support.
(brief presentations by project representatives)
Discussion on how to encourage enhanced regional cooperation and donor support.
- 18.00: End of meeting

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Brief progress report on projects included in the HEWG Action Plan of September 2000

I. Key measures

Stability Pact Network for Postgraduate Studies in SEE

No network for postgraduate studies in SEE has been established. However, the HEWG impulse has contributed to support for postgraduate study programmes by a number of bilateral donors, such as the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the Norwegian Co-operation Programme for South East Europe.

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Project on Governance and Management of Higher Education in SEE

This project started in January 2002 and the first meeting of the Steering Committee took place on 22-23 March 2002, back-to-back with the HEWG meeting. A tentative proposal for discussion will be the creation of a regional network on governance and management. For more details, please see <http://www.cepes.ro/hed/policy/see/homepage.html>

Contact: Lazar Vlasceanu, UNESCO-CEPES <l.vlasceanu@cepes.ro>

Expansion and strengthening of the Tempus programme in SEE

3 SEE regional seminars were organised by Tempus during 2000 and 2001 in the fields of management and policy, networking and institution building, to develop the basis for its activities in SEE as part of Tempus III. The programme has now been expanded to include Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia). The Tempus priorities are now in line with the Bologna Process. For more details, please see:

<http://www.etf.eu.int/etfweb.nsf/pages/seehome>

Contact: Martin Westlake, European Commission, DG Education and Culture,
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SEE Faculty Development Programme

OSI has committed 3 million USD to this programme, based on individual grants and unit partnerships. Experience has shown that working with units has been more effective than with individuals. A number of functioning regional partnerships already exist. For more information, please see: http://www.osi.hu/hesp/pr_southeast.html

Contact: Katalin Miklos, Higher Education Support Programme, OSI. kmiklos@osi.hu

Strengthening of the Civic Education Project in SEE

CEP has been expanded to include Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Serbia, and supports visiting and local faculty fellows, Eastern scholars and student projects. For more information, please see: <http://www.cep.org.hu>

Contact: Liana Ghent, Civic Education Project LGhent@osi.hu

Participation of SEE in the Bologna Process

The Trends II report presented at the Salamanca Convention and the Ministers' meeting in Prague in 2001 included all countries of SEE. Croatia officially joined the Bologna Process during the Prague meeting, and SEE was specifically mentioned in the Prague Communiqué by the Ministers. Serbia and Montenegro were included in the follow-up process in early 2002. For the Council of Europe, ESIB and EUA – all observers to the process and members of the various follow-up groups, the inclusion of SEE countries in the Bologna Process is a priority, and is reflected in their various activities. For more details, please see: <http://www.bologna-berlin2003.de/>
 Contact: Lesley Wilson, EUA lesley.wilson@eua.be

II. Quick start projects

AEGEE Education for democracy

The first year of this student mobility project was very successful, while the current second year is proving difficult to manage. AEGEE does not yet know whether a third year will take place. A general conclusion is that there is a need for more structured mobility programmes, which can hopefully take place within the Socrates framework when this opens to SEE. For more details, please see <http://www.aegge.org/efd/>
 Contact: Frank Burgdörfer frank@burgdoerfer.de

Network of career advisory centres - SEE passageway Education – Employment

This network has not yet been formed – but the basis is being created through a series of WUS information and counselling centres at universities throughout SEE. For more information, please see <http://www.wus-austria.org>
 Contact: Wolfgang Benedek: office@wus-austria.org

Balkan case challenge 2001 - case study competition

This event took place in 2001 and was very well received by students from across SEE. It was supported by several donors, including WUS, DAAD, OSI and the private sector. It is intended to continue the initiative. For more information, please see <http://www.wus-austria.org/balkanchallenge/>
 Contact: Wolfgang Benedek: office@wus-austria.org

Kosovo Summer University

The first Kosovo Summer University took place in July 2001 and proved very successful. The positive evaluations of this event have resulted in the Dutch government ensuring finance for the next three years. In 2001, close links were also made with the summer school in Kotor, Montenegro. For more information, please see: <http://www.academictraining.org>
 Contact: Yannick du Pont, ksu@academictraining.org

Summer School in Social Sciences "In search of the public sphere in the Balkans"

Because of events in Macedonia during the summer of 2001, the location of this regional summer school was changed and it was held at the University of Cluj, Romania in May 2001, under the umbrella of the Association Roumaine des Chercheurs Francophones en Sciences Humaines (ARCHES). For more details see: <http://www.arches.ro>
 Contact: Ciprian Mihali, cmihali@hiphi.ubbcluj.ro

Regional seminar for credential evaluators

This regional seminar was organised by the Albanian Ministry of Education and the Council of Europe and held in Tirana in February 2001. For more information, please see http://www.see-educoop.net/portal/id_graz.htm

Contact: Villano Qiriazhi, villano.qiriazhi@coe.int

Social Science in Prishtina

After a one-year planning and preparatory phase, the new Department of Social Sciences opened at the University of Prishtina at the start of the 2001-2002 academic year. 350 students are enrolled and most of the courses are co-taught by local and international professors. More funding is still needed in order to make the programme sustainable.

Contact: Jens Vang, dia_unikos@yahoo.se

Training for civil servants and NGO leaders

This ambitious project was not started because the necessary funds were not found.

Contact: Sophie Howlett, howletts@ceu.hu

For all information regarding the Enhanced Graz Process and the HEWG please visit: <http://www.see-educoop.net>, where a full inventory of previous higher education projects and programmes in the Stability Pact framework can be obtained.