

Recommendations

International Conference on South Eastern Europe Educational Co-operation for Peace, Stability and Democracy, 12th–14th Nov. 1999, Sofia Bulgaria

Recognising the Recommendations of the Austrian Presidency Conference "European Educational Co-operation for Peace, Stability and Democracy" held in Graz in November 1998;

Recognising the subsequent work of the Graz Process Task Force, and particularly the Recommendations of the five Preparatory Workshops organised in this framework;

Taking into account the Declaration of the European Ministers of Education (Budapest, 24/26 June 1999) on the Kosovo crisis and post war regional development, and the reference made to the work of the Graz Process in this document;

Following the launch of the Stability Pact in June 1999, and the decision taken at the first meeting of Table 1 on Democratisation and Human Rights (Geneva, 18/19 October 1999) to include education among the major priorities for action, for development within the framework of an enhanced Graz Process;

In view of the need to present a co-ordinated, concrete programme of educational reforms to Mr Max van der Stoep, Chair of Table 1, in Budapest, on 24 January 2000;

The participants present in Sofia agreed on the following goals
Maximising the pivotal role of education in achieving sustainable regional development through its inclusion as a priority within the Stability Pact. Democratisation and respect for human rights needs a widespread understanding of the rights and responsibilities of European citizenship. Good neighbourliness and reconciliation can also be furthered through education.

Furthering the key role of education and training in helping people to cope with change, and to respond flexibly to an uncertain labour market. Sustained economic growth is impossible without a skilled and educated workforce.

Working towards the creation of an inclusive European educational area that extends to all peoples in Southeastern Europe. Integration requires commitment and involves a learning process on all sides;

Ensuring that investment in education and training is recognised as a long-term process, to be considered within a minimum ten year perspective, while recognising that short-term action is also necessary to meet immediate needs. This process requires the active support of national governments, non-governmental organisations and the international community, working together within a common framework to ensure sustainability and change from within.

Taking collective responsibility for ensuring that the high expectations raised by the Stability Pact are met, especially given past experience of

raised by the Stability Pact are met, especially given past experience of being left behind in the European integration process, of suffering the effects of war and inadequate reforms.

Mobilising the necessary financial resources to meet these challenges both through increasing the level of funding from external donors and by encouraging increased expenditure on education at national level; Better orienting future external support. Action undertaken should be based on a clear identification of needs, be closely monitored and its impact evaluated. Experience has demonstrated that existing mechanisms have made valuable contributions in specific countries/areas/sectors/ or as pilot initiatives, but are not sufficient to bring about sustainable systemic reform in the prevailing conditions of severe economic weakness and political instability.

To reach these goals participants agreed upon following principles for action

Ensuring equal access to education for all;

Mainstreaming education for Roma and Sinti populations;

Listening and responding to the needs identified by regional experts rather than offering a donor-driven perspective at all stages of the process (programming, implementation, evaluation etc.): the countries of the region are owners of the process;

Developing mechanisms for systematically reviewing the present situation, as well as for monitoring and evaluating the impact of action undertaken, thus ensuring quality control and learning from past mistakes;

Viewing education as a whole and ensuring links between the different parts of the system, e.g. secondary and higher education, general/vocational, formal/non-formal;

Ensuring sustainability and integration at systemic level of pilot actions undertaken, by building in support for appropriate multiplication mechanisms;

Recognising the current realities and diversity between countries in the region and developing instruments which are sufficiently flexible to respond to rapidly changing needs;

Enabling local actors to take responsibility for and thus ownership of the process.

Priority areas for action identified by participants

Cross cutting issues, cf. Action plans of Thematic Working Groups for specific recommendations

The improvement of the systematic exchange of information through follow-up of the results of the forthcoming Feasibility Study concerning the establishment of a Southeastern Europe Cooperation Centre (SEE-ECC);

Strengthening and improving teacher education, both initial and in-service, especially through its development at cross border and at regional level, given the paramount importance of teachers as change agents in the education process;

agents in the education process;

Fostering mutually beneficial partnerships between educational institutions at all levels and the Community at large in which they are situated;

Encouraging broad public debate on educational matters involving all stakeholders as part of the democratic transition process;

Support to youth and student organisations in the region as key partners with the motivation, creativity and responsibility to carry through the transition process;

The improvement of the management of educational institutions at all levels of the system, and of the capacity to manage change, encourage innovation and provide incentives for qualified staff, especially young staff, to remain within the system;

Promoting language policy and learning as a source of mutual enrichment enabling citizens to respond to the opportunities and challenges presented by an increasingly inter-connected Europe;

The opening up of EU and other education and training programmes/development of special initiatives to include the countries of Southeastern Europe and which enable the transfer of experience from countries more advanced in the transition process.

Action Plan and Recommendations for major priorities to be addressed for each key theme are included in the following pages.

The full results of the discussions of each Working Group will be made available to participants in due course and will be part of the final Conference documentation.

Sofia, 14.11.1999

Action Plan

Vision and Strategy

Recommendations

Follow-up of the results of the Feasibility Study being launched by the European Commission concerning the establishment of a Southeastern Europe Cooperation Centre as recommended in Graz with a view to:

Improving the systematic exchange of information/Clearing House function

Supporting networking between existing centres in the region with other European partners

furthering inter-sectoral and inter-institutional educational cooperation across Europe

Providing a co-ordinating mechanism by which countries that have decided upon change can review existing progress as well as plan, implement, monitor and evaluate their further development

Pending the possible creation of a "physical" Centre, the Graz Process should strengthen and expand its already functioning homepage (<http://www.see-educoop.net>) as well as developing other Clearing House functions.

The Recommendations of the Sofia Conference should be taken into account by those responsible for carrying out the Feasibility Study.

account by those responsible for carrying out the Feasibility Study.
Some characteristics of a future Southeast European Cooperation Centre Based in the region, networking and supporting individual centres in the region

Light structure, fostering inter-institutional co-operation, thus avoiding duplication of efforts, and serving the needs of institutions, independent experts and decision makers

Providing guarantees of excellence and high quality standards, e.g. through standing committees of outstanding experts from the region and beyond

Provide access to and disseminate up-to-date information on a wide range of educational issues

Rapid and flexible response mechanism to respond to new needs through the development and implementation of pilot projects

Ability to support and facilitate review, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

History and History Teaching

Recommendations

1. To develop a range of cross-border and multilateral initiatives in history education. This would be aimed at (a) encouraging greater mutual and comparative understanding of the history of the region from a multiplicity of perspectives; (b) developing the skills and values necessary for the development of civil society.

2. To implement a framework for action which will build on and complement existing expertise and ongoing programmes and initiatives.

3. To facilitate the setting up of a coordinating committee of experts and government officials to manage a coherent strategic framework for the region. Its functions would include identifying priorities for development; establishing networks; cross fertilisation of ideas and experience; and evaluating and disseminating good practice. The Council of Europe is requested to establish this committee on behalf of the Graz Process.

Action Plan

Co-ordinating Committee for History and History Teaching

The training of history teachers in new methodologies

comparative approaches to teaching the history of the region;

using teaching approaches designed to help students critically analyse and interpret evidence;

handling controversial and sensitive issues in the classroom;

using out of school resources, incorporating a multiplicity of historical perspectives; drawing on social, cultural, political and economic approaches to history.

Actions

Phase 1: Stocktaking activity to establish the current situation and identify gaps

Phase 2: Initiate two pilot projects:

Project 1: a series of unilateral, bilateral and multilateral workshops for potential

potential

"multipliers" in the region on new methodologies.

Project 2: A residential short course drawing together historians, teacher educators and history teachers on comparative approaches to teaching the history of South East Europe

The development of teaching resources

Phase 1: Stocktaking activity to establish the current situation and identify gaps

Phase 2:

Project 1: Initiate a two year project where groups of teachers and experts co-operate to produce exemplar materials and a guide for teachers on how to use them. This would be followed up by work with publishers to develop a wider range of materials using this approach as a model. Project 2: Expand upon the work of the Textbook Committee of the ongoing Joint History Project.

Higher Education

Phase 1. Stocktaking activity to establish the current situation and identify gaps

Phase 2. (1) Provide support for the development of specific networks (e.g. of historians, teacher trainers, history students, ...) (2) Provide resources and support for the professional development of historians; (3) A cooperative pilot project involving 4 to 6 universities across the region to initiate exchange programmes for historians and postgraduate researchers, joint teaching projects, a pilot scheme for credit transfer for history students between the collaborating universities

Youth

(1) To extend existing history initiatives and programmes for young people to all the countries of South East Europe. This could include the work of the Korber Foundation, the Socrates Programme, the Europe at School activity of the Council of Europe

(2) A pilot project involving a network of schools along the lines of the Council of Europe Black Sea Initiative on History

(3) A pilot project involving the organisation of a youth camp around a historical, archaeological or ecological site of regional significance.

Higher Education and its role in the development of a Civil Society

Higher education is a long term investment, central to ensuring both the supply of skilled future leaders and a pool of current expertise. Without such measures including necessary reforms of Higher Education the brain drain, which has reached dramatic proportions will continue to deprive the region of essential human resources necessary to achieve lasting peace, stability and democracy.

Higher Education institutions play an important role in the on-going European, integration process. Existing EU instruments as well as other instruments should be adapted to include institutions or individuals from countries currently not eligible to participate. Mechanisms should be designed to create synergies between existing programmes, and/or new programmes developed to fill such gaps.

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All SEE countries should be included in the follow-up activities to implement the Bologna Declaration, thereby ensuring their belonging to the European Area of Higher Education.

Higher Education and Society

Institution building for civil society

Support for HE cooperation with business, local communities, government and NGOs

Promoting HE institutions as resources for life-long learning

Contribution to social cohesion

Establishment of a regional working group on proactive policies

facilitating the participation of minorities in education

Support for development of policy instruments for social cohesion at system and institutional level

Introduce measures to ensure equal opportunities

Supporting student activities to actively participate in civil society and enhancing their professional potential

Strengthening the link between university autonomy and the responsibility of institutions of H.E. towards society.

Higher Education Management

New forms of strategic management

Regional training courses for university leaders

Experts assistance in legal reform strategic plans, policy and mission statements

Creating pools of expertise from SEE and other regions

Quality assurance

Training in self-evaluation techniques

Creation of a pool of quality assurance reviewers from the region and beyond

Regional cooperation for the development of joint standards and assessment procedures

Involvement of all SEE countries in EU Quality Assurance Network

Mutual academic recognition of diplomas and qualifications

Establishment of credit systems such as ECTS

Introduction of the Diploma Supplement as a tool for transparency

Curriculum Development

Offering curricula relevant to the region, with input from the stakeholders

Developing teacher training to ensure the management of diversity at all levels in education

Reshaping degree structures in Higher Education along the lines of the Bologna Declaration

Regional cooperation

Need for Comprehensive Scheme for Cooperation in Higher Education for South East Europe

Joint efforts to counteract both external and internal brain drain.

Networking on curriculum development projects, student and staff exchanges, internships, research projects, links with society and

exchanges, internships, research projects, links with society and stakeholders, students organisations, thematic issues

Joint training for university administration including international relations and joint degree programmes

Information / dissemination: Inventory on projects in progress, information on ongoing events, dissemination of best practices, Newsletter on activities of Graz process

Regional policy concertation as a long-term perspective

Joint approaches built on best governmental and non governmental practice for a policy for widening participation by all minorities, including Roma participation.

Vocational Education and Training and its Role in the Development of Civil Society

Priorities

Using VET as a tool to move from social exclusion to social inclusion through ensuring equal opportunities and strengthening the role of schools in their communities

Improving democratic institutional management based in particular on increasing the shared responsibilities of all the actors involved;

Increasing the empowerment of citizens through provision of lifelong learning opportunities and new social partnerships based upon a culture of dialogue

Identifying the most effective bridges between VET and citizenship education

Action Plan

1. teachers/trainers training

- curriculum development and teachers/trainers training modules to develop social skills (intercultural thinking, conflict management, media skills, communication skills, entrepreneurial skills, critical thinking, team building)

inter-active methods

activities based on the model of training firms

extracurricula activities

2. development of participatory management

empowerment of actors: principals, teachers, parents, social partners, local public authorities to participate in decision making processes, assuming responsibilities, and thus contributing to development of ownership

training for management of key actors (school level, local level, national level)

3. changing schools into community resource centres

rationalise the use of resources by encouraging joint use of existing infrastructure and expertise

using schools for promoting social inclusion e.g. second chance for drop outs, unemployed

using schools for promoting democratic values e.g. adults training for assuming active social roles such as participation in organisation of

assuming active social roles such as participation in organisation of interest groups

4. networking and twinning

- for promotion of innovation and reform by exchanging expertise and setting up support mechanisms starting with the development of a networking culture at national level

- for regional development which should promote intercultural understanding:

by cross border co-operation and bi or multilateral co-operation e.g. in business education and administration, tourism and engineering, entrepreneurship and social partnership

National Observatories of ETF supporting the related developments and the co-operation

extend Leonardo and Socrates participation in the region for reaching peace and democracy

provision of necessary tools for communication (access to communication technology, foreign languages skills and increased mobility)

Management of Diversity

1. The concept of diversity should extend beyond ethnicity to include all its aspects (e.g. age, gender, religion, ethnicity, citizen status). It should be based on the respect for human rights, democracy and pluralism and evolve in response to the complex challenges of countries in transition.

2. Management of diversity is an important tool for individual empowerment by promoting inclusive multiple identities based upon the respect for the right to be different, thus contributing to social cohesion and unity.

3. Education for the acceptance, respect and responsibility for diversity includes acquiring competencies such as openness to and interest in others; crosscultural communication and understanding; critical approach to social reality, including to ethnocentrism; democratic citizenship knowledge, values and attitudes. Teachers' competencies should include developing sensitivity to group dynamics and mediation skills.

Actions aiming at the inclusion of diversity into the mainstream culture should include

making an inventory of activities and good practices in the region (projects, actions, model schools, etc.)

identification of local and regional experts and institutions active in and willing to develop models of diversity and intercultural education

cross curricula analysis and development with a view to integrating the broad concept of diversity

initial and in-service teacher training based on examples of good practice, and including methods and approaches which deconstruct ethnic and national identity myths, stereotypes, prejudices and ethnocentrism and promote a multicultural perspective in education (language learning, studies in folk cultures, arts, youth lifestyles)

promotion of regional small scale research (action research and case studies)

studies)

mobilisation of local and regional forces, particularly NGOs as well as regional networking and exchange programmes for experts, teachers and students

development of support systems including legal provisions, decentralised decision making, closer involvement of local authorities and communities, increase of school autonomy, reorganisation of school administration and promotion of democratic school and classroom climate

promotion of cooperation among grassroot initiatives, local and national authorities and schools, with a view to linking formal and non formal education in this field.

All activities in this field should be supported by a wide range of international institutions such as : European Commission, Council of Europe, Royaumont process, UNESCO, UNICEF, as well as other international and national foundations and donors and respective governments

Education for Democratic Citizenship

Education for democratic citizenship aims to promote a culture of human rights, democratic principles and citizens' participation and responsibilities and is therefore essential in the transition to democracy

Education for democratic citizenship has political, economic, social, cultural dimensions. It includes formal and non-formal education within a lifelong learning process and needs to focus on the simultaneous acquisition of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes.

The promotion of education for democratic citizenship requires parallel actions at policy and institutional levels, as well as at school and civil society levels.

Actions, needing financial support, should include policy and curriculum development, teacher training, educational material production, support to grassroot initiatives and NGOs, as well as networking, exchanges and partnerships between actors of education for democratic citizenship.

Action Plan

EDC in educational policy

1. Policy development

comparative study of existing EDC policies and structures in SEE (needs assessment study)

regional stocktaking conference on EDC policies

Workshops for policy makers (national, regional)

study visits of educational administrators, staff teachers

2. Curriculum development

create a regional group of experts on curriculum development

organise a regional seminar on curriculum development

EDC in schools

1. Teacher training

Contents and methods of EDC, including human rights and media education

education

The school in the community

Democratic practices in the classroom

2. Strengthening relations between school and community

Development of training modules for improving school and community relations

Regional Trainings for teachers, multipliers, decisions makers

Support for Dissemination

3. Democratic school management and autonomy

Regional workshops on good practices

Support structures for dissemination

Regional trainings for educational staff in schools

4. Educational materials development

Cooperative review of existing and development of new regional educational materials

EDC in civil society (Sites of citizenship and NGOs)

Collect and disseminate examples of good practice

Support for site development (project management training, experts visits, exchanges)

Networking between sites and NGOs through seminars and exchanges

Comparative action research (analysis and evaluation)

Twinning, networking, and partnerships

Between schools, sites of citizenship, teachers, pupils, trainers

Crossborder regional; between SouthEast and Western Europe

Youth

Not unlike gender questions, "youth" is one of those transversal items, difficult to integrate in classical approaches to education policies. Within the Stability Pact and under the active coordination of the Enhanced Graz Process, the European Commission, the Council of Europe, UNICEF and the Dutch Government together with the National Unions of Students in Europe recommend to the Sofia Conference:

to highlight the important role and vulnerability of children and youth appropriately in each of the Working Groups and in the Final Report, and to point to the necessity of participation and action;

to foresee, in the planning of any other meeting on education within Working Table 1, a particular Working Group on "youth", involving youth representation committed to educational action in the region, and support staff from agencies, national administrations and European and International Organisations;

to take stock of the results of intersectoral and interinstitutional meetings between the initiators of this recommendation and others who will join eventually, and make good use of them for the success of the Stability Pact.

