

THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA AND SOUTH EAST EUROPE

Statement from the Meeting of South-East European Educational Cooperation Network, Ljubljana, 10 – 11 July 2003

South-East European Educational Cooperation Network (SEE ECN) is the most comprehensive educational information network in South Eastern Europe. It was established in 2000 in the framework of Enhanced Graz process with a support from Government of Austria and Open Society Institute Network. Today, with additional support of Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, its main functions are provided by a coordination "hub" at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, and nine "country nodes" in all countries of the region: Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, FYR of Macedonia, Kosovo, Albania, Bulgaria, Romania and Moldova. Membership currently includes 226 institutions (largely universities and NGO but also all regional Ministries of Education, etc.) and 127 individual experts (most of them from universities and research institutes) predominately from the region but also from other European countries and global world.

The main aim of the network is to contribute to the development of (higher) education in the countries of the region making bridges to other European countries and global world. A multi-lingual homepage with almost 2.000 documents and other information has been developed, also with a special focus on the languages of the region. The network also provides targeted capacity and institution building measures for experts and teachers in SEE drawing widely on already existing expertise in the region, promoting and strengthening co-operation in the region as well as supporting access to other European networks.

SEE ECN recognized the importance of the Bologna Process from the beginning and this issue has been always high on its agenda. The network and its particular members have taken part in various activities: providing information, taking part in surveys and preparation of documents, translating them and attending regional seminars. A special "Bologna" web site has been also developed (http://www.see-educoop.net/portal/id_bologna.htm) to promote Bologna Process in the region and to provide regional information on higher education for a global public.

We, participants of the Annual Meeting of the SEE ECN held in Ljubljana, 10 – 11 July 2003, welcome the information that four new countries from the region applied for "Bologna" membership (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, FYR of Macedonia, Albania). We believe that their active involvement into Bologna Process will strengthen importantly the further development of higher education in the region and will also contribute to broader social reforms on national levels and to a renewed cooperation on regional level.

The South-East European Educational Cooperation Network warmly recommends the Ministers responsible for higher education at their September 2003 Berlin Summit:

- to accept the requests for membership of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania and to welcome these states as new members of the Bologna Process;
- to note that the successful creation of the European higher education area depends also on the international support to the Bologna reforms in the countries which launched them later and in significantly less favourable circumstances;
- to lean on various European and/or regional networks which are in a unique position to contribute to the further development of the European higher education area.

Participants of the Annual Meeting of the SEE ECN, representatives of the following institutions:

- *Center for Democratic Education, Tirana, ALBANIA*
- *National Institute of Education, Sofia, BULGARIA*
- *Centre for Educational Research and Development, Zagreb, CROATIA*
- *Kosova Education Center, Pristina, KOSOVO*
- *Faculty of Philosophy Skopje, St. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, FYR of MACEDONIA*
- *Institute for Public Policy, Chisinau, MOLDOVA*
- *School Inspectorate, Podgorica, MONTENEGRO*
- *Institute of Educational Sciences, Bucharest, ROMANIA*
- *Center for Educational Policy Studies, University of Ljubljana, SLOVENIA*
- *Open Society Educational Programs – South East Europe, Ljubljana, SLOVENIA*
- *KulturKontakt, Vienna, AUSTRIA*
- *Task Force Education and Youth, Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe*

Ljubljana, 11 July 2003