



**2008-2009
ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL
OF THE REGIONAL
COOPERATION COUNCIL ON
REGIONAL CO-OPERATION IN
SOUTH EAST EUROPE**

Sarajevo, 14 May 2009

I. Introduction

The Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) has completed its first year of full operational ability. It was conceived as a novel structure of regional cooperation in South East Europe resulting from the progress that the region has accomplished with regard to its economic, social and democratic development and advancement on the path of European and Euro-Atlantic integration. The RCC was launched in order to sustain the principle of regional ownership and enhanced regional cooperation and place the responsibility for its future into the hands of the region.

Promoting and enhancing cooperation in the priority areas, namely, economic and social development, infrastructure and energy, justice and home affairs, security cooperation, building human capital and cross-cutting issues and parliamentary cooperation, the RCC also supports the European and Euro-Atlantic integration and creates a political climate susceptible to carrying out projects of a wider, regional character to the benefit of its each individual member.

South East Europe and in particular Western Balkans, as candidates and potential candidates for the European Union (EU) membership, are steadily advancing with their EU accession-related efforts and reforms. All countries of South East Europe have, to date, achieved institutional links with the EU, in line with their respective status in relation to the EU. Regional cooperation has taken a genuinely and authentically new course. Both aspects of the development in South East Europe need to be consolidated and invigorated. This is particularly important against the backdrop of the EU enlargement policy and strategy. This is, also, additionally vital as the region is still faced with a number of unresolved and open issues affecting the completion of durable stability in South East Europe and also impeding the EU accession efforts. In addition, current economic crisis has brought in potentially adverse effects on further political and social stabilization, whilst economic slowdown may additionally influence the development agendas in the region.

Overall there have been notable strides forward in the past year. Albania's Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU entered into force as of April 2009 and it submitted the application for the EU membership at the end of April 2009. Bosnia and Herzegovina signed a Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU and the Interim Agreement entered into force. The Interim Agreement with Montenegro is also being implemented and this country submitted an application for membership in the EU in December 2008. The Council of the EU has recently tasked the European Commission to prepare an opinion on this country's application for EU membership. The presidential and municipal elections in The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, held in March/April 2009 met most of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe standards and this development contributes to the fulfillment of conditions set for this candidate country to open accession negotiations with the EU. The Republic of Moldova achieved progress in the

implementation of the EU-Moldova European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) Action Plan and started preparing for negotiations on a new agreement on cooperation with the EU.

On the other hand in respect to the European integration, the advanced progress of Croatia's EU accession negotiations received a setback due to the dispute regarding unresolved border issue with Slovenia. Serbia has yet to achieve progress allowing for the entry into force of the Interim Agreement and start of the ratification process of the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU.

The accession of Albania and Croatia to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in April 2009 is a major step forward which will give a new shape to the stability landscape of South East Europe. The Alliance is furthermore determined to extend an invitation to join to The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as soon as a mutually accepted solution to the name issue is found within the framework of the United Nations (UN). The European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX Kosovo) successfully deployed and started its activities. The dialogue on visa liberalization between the EU and five countries of the region which will result in lifting the visa obligation when conditions in individual roadmaps have been met presents a positive development. It is expected that relevant decisions will be taken by the end of 2009 that some of the countries will have met the requirements in their road map and the visa requirement will have been lifted as of 2010, bringing about a tangible achievement primarily for the benefit of the citizens.

Bilateral relations between the countries are on the rise as showcased by a number of high-level bilateral visits throughout South East Europe. Steps taken by leaders of three political parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina which should lead to meeting the conditions for this country's further advancement on the European and Euro-Atlantic path should be welcomed and further encouraged.

On the other hand, an economic recession has set in both, developed and stable European economies as well as in more fragile, though dynamic and quickly emerging transition economies of Eastern and South East Europe. In addition to the recession, the beginning of 2009 was exacerbated by the gas transit dispute between the Russian Federation and Ukraine, underscoring the dependence of South East Europe on energy imports from a sole energy source. However, the latter event mobilized solidarity and raised awareness of the area of South East Europe to the strategic importance of acting jointly in tackling such an important and crucial issue as energy security.

In such circumstances, the RCC carried out its substantial activities with a view to creating an atmosphere for the region to double its efforts to keep the European partners, international organizations and international financial institutions (IFIs) as well as other partners engaged, by applying the necessary EU accession related reforms, enhancing regional cooperation and mutual assistance, and taking a pragmatic and flexible stance towards open bilateral issues in the spirit of cooperation, understanding and good neighborly relations.

This Annual Report of the Secretary General of the RCC covers the period after the adoption of the Strategic Work Programme of the RCC for the period 2008-2009 at the end of May 2009 in Pomorie. The Annual Report is submitted to the RCC Board for the adoption and, subsequently, it shall be presented to the RCC Annual Meeting (Chisinau, 4 June 2009) for review and endorsement, both in accordance with the Statute of the RCC. It outlines the main activities and achievements of the RCC in carrying out the objectives set in the Strategic Work Programme for the period 2008-2009 in the first year of its full operational capacity. It also lays out the overall background and crucial developments impacting and shaping the activities of the RCC in the past year.

In mid-2008, the transition from the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe to the RCC was fully completed by setting up the RCC Secretariat in Sarajevo. Its Liaison Office in Brussels was officially launched in October 2008 although operational from the end of August 2008, after the signing of the Headquarters Agreement between the Kingdom of Belgium and the RCC Secretariat. The staffing of the RCC Secretariat is about to be completed with the commencement of work of the Expert on Infrastructure and Energy as of beginning of June 2009. The mandate of the Special Envoy of the RCC Secretary General for the Relations with the Presidency of the Council of the EU was activated in mid July 2008. An RCC Communication Strategy was put in place and duly implemented.

The efforts of the RCC focused on key priorities for further economic and social progress in South East Europe, further promotion of democratic values and reforms, support to the realization of the European perspective, including the consolidation of institutional dialogue with the EU institutions, promotion of the region of South East Europe as a reliable partner on the international arena and consolidation of its own structure and role. Consolidation and greater efficiency of regional processes and initiatives in joint cooperation of the RCC members from South East Europe, EU and institutions, relevant international organizations and IFIs as well as other interested partners lay at the core of its activities.

II. Political, Institutional and General Aspects of the RCC Secretariat's Activities

1) Consultations with the RCC members and other regional and international partners

The Secretary General of the RCC carried out a series of political consultations with Heads of Government and Ministers of Foreign Affairs and other high-level officials of the RCC members from South East Europe. The talks were aimed at securing the continuing commitment and support of the RCC members from South East Europe to regional cooperation and the RCC in the implementation of its Strategic Work Programme 2008-2009. The discussions revolved around promoting and strengthening regional cooperation in South East Europe in the RCC priority areas with a view to further fostering the European integration prospects of the entire region.

The interlocutors also assessed the overall political situation in South East Europe, emphasizing that with new security challenges and setting in of the world financial crisis with an economic slowdown, political leaders of South East Europe needed to approach open issues with a sense of added urgency and firmly continue with reforms, strengthening self-responsibility to ensure stabilization and avoid lagging behind. The political leaders from the region expressed appreciation for the role of the RCC in fostering regional cooperation and committed to strengthening regional ownership.

The political outreach to the RCC members from South East Europe brought to the attention of the Heads of Government and Ministers the importance of enhancing the role of National Coordinators for the RCC within national structures. In practical terms, it is the role and responsibility of National Coordinators for the RCC to coordinate domestic institutions in the process of generating and elaborating ideas and project proposals for regional cooperation within the RCC framework. Such an enhanced role of RCC National Coordinators came to the fore in the framework of the networking mechanism that the RCC launched and which will be described later.

The RCC Secretary General continued the process of engaging the partners from outside South East Europe in dialogue on the modalities of regional cooperation. He held political consultations with senior officials in majority of the RCC members and donors in capitals such as Berlin, Berne, Budapest, Dublin, London, Madrid, Paris, Prague, Stockholm, Vienna and Washington. He also maintained dialogue with heads of international organizations and IFIs including NATO, the World Bank, OSCE, Council of Europe, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN ECE), European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), Council of Europe Development Bank, as well as with the relevant institutions of the EU, including the Presidency of the EU Council, the European Commission and the European Parliament. The dialogue with transatlantic partners confirmed the intention to maintain presence in South East Europe, an

area of national interest. Alongside strengthening the principle of regional ownership, it is still very important for the international partners to remain substantially engaged in South East Europe and assist the region in realizing its development goals through regional cooperation.

A particular point of concern of many interlocutors was the participation of the Kosovo authorities in the RCC activities. Appreciating the importance of participation of Kosovo authorities in regional development projects, as a project-oriented regional cooperation body, the RCC abided by its statutory provisions, according to which Kosovo authorities participated within the framework of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) on behalf of Kosovo in accordance with the UN Security Council Resolution 1244, under an UNMIK/Kosovo tag.

Political consultations of the Secretary General of the RCC with all the stakeholders, primarily those from South East Europe, revealed full political support for regional cooperation and ownership from the highest political level. This support needs to be sustained and translated into concrete action on the working and expert levels.

With regard to its outreach activities, a practice of lectures and/or visits of senior officials of the RCC members, from the region or from other partner countries and organizations and institutions, to the RCC Secretariat was introduced. The public lecture of the Member of Bundestag and State Minister in the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Germany, Gernot Erler was the first step in this direction. The joint visit of three Ministers of Foreign Affairs of EU Member States, representing current, incoming and previous Presidency of the EU Council, namely, Karel Sczwarzenberg of the Czech Republic, Carl Bildt of Sweden and Bernard Kouchner of France, was another major confirmation of the importance the EU attaches to the RCC. It is expected that this will raise the visibility of regional cooperation within the RCC framework among the public throughout the region. In addition to this, the intention is to promote the RCC Secretariat as ownership of all its members which should be used and supported.

2) Cooperation within the RCC Board

The Board of the RCC, a body providing operational guidance and supervision in between Annual Meetings of the RCC, held four sessions in the reporting period, on 6 October and 12 December 2008 and on 5 March and 14 May 2009. The meetings demonstrated that the Board functioned successfully despite differences in positions of some members. The Board was additionally strengthened by the active participation of all its members. The voice of South East Europe was clearly heard during the meetings pinpointing to the region taking the matters of regional cooperation increasingly into its hands. Such activity and engagement of the countries of South East Europe is particularly encouraging in light of the need to sustain and reinforce regional ownership principle.

The varying dynamics on the domestic front as well as in bilateral relations in some of the RCC members from the region did not impede regional cooperation. The full agendas of the meetings of the RCC Board were indicative of activities picking up more and more and entailing additional challenges and demands on both, the RCC National Coordinators and the RCC Secretariat. In the past year the RCC brought its efforts to the level of more substantial work on development projects in the five priority areas. Close cooperation and synergy between the RCC Board members and the RCC Secretariat was essential in achieving this goal.

The headway achieved within the RCC framework in the course of the reporting period was challenged to some extent by the question of attendance of the delegation of UNMIK/Kosovo at the meetings organized within the RCC framework in Sarajevo. There were difficulties concerning the issuing of entry visas to the members of the delegation of UNMIK/Kosovo on the part of the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina as the host country to the RCC Secretariat.

The RCC Secretariat took appropriate steps to ensure the attendance of all the members in its activities and worked with the members of the RCC Board as well as with the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina on securing conditions for unhampered and inclusive regional cooperation in accordance with its statutory documents. Absence of any RCC member from the discussions, activities and decision-making could have a negative impact on regional cooperation and undermine the overall achievements. This is why creating conditions for the development of regional cooperation in South East Europe remains an obligation of all RCC members, as outlined in the Joint Declaration on the Establishment of the RCC and the RCC Statute.

3) Process of networking among RCC National Coordinators from South East Europe, RCC Secretariat, European Commission and relevant IFIs

In keeping with the Strategic Work Programme of the RCC 2008 – 2009, a process of networking between the RCC National Coordinators from South East Europe, the RCC Secretariat, the European Commission and relevant IFIs was launched by the Secretary General of the RCC. Three meetings of RCC National Coordinators from South East Europe were held, in June and November 2008 and February 2009. In its initial stage this process addressed specifically National Coordinators from RCC members from South East Europe but, in order to ensure full coordination and efficiency of available programs and projects, it is intended also to involve other main players with an interest in South East Europe, namely the European Commission and IFIs. So far the response from these partners to the initiative has been positive and the process will be expanded to representatives of the European Commission and IFIs as the next step.

The objective of this initiative is to establish a framework for the identification and follow-up of the most important project ideas as well as for streamlining and future permanent networking

between the RCC members from South East Europe (represented by the RCC National Coordinators), experts in the RCC Secretariat and representatives of relevant services of the European Commission and IFIs with regard to the identified regional priorities.

So far this process has produced the following tangible results:

- An analytical document produced by the RCC Secretariat outlining the priorities of the region within the framework of the five priority areas of the RCC entitled “Overview of Regional Cooperation Priorities – Level of Harmonization of National Activities and Strategies with the Strategic Work Programme of the RCC 2008 – 2009 as well as with the Multi-beneficiary Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) Programme 2008 Priorities”, based on inputs from RCC members from South East Europe,
- A list of Project Ideas for Multi-beneficiary IPA Programme 2010 developed in the five priority areas of the RCC submitted to the European Commission for funding from the Multi-beneficiary IPA Programme,
- A list of Project Ideas for Other Donors, as well as
- A Preliminary List of Events in 2009.

Taking into consideration the complexity and demanding character of this process as well as its novelty and usefulness in identifying priority areas for generating regional projects, its first steps are encouraging. It has inherent added value for promoting the principle of genuine regional ownership and mobilizing the potential for sustainable regional cooperation in South East Europe. This form of cooperation is complementary to the MB IPA process since it addresses the whole area of South East Europe.

4) Cooperation with the EU and its institutions

One of the objectives of the RCC in the past year was to achieve and consolidate constructive and fruitful cooperation with the EU and its institutions in view of the overarching ambition of its members from South East Europe to be integrated into the European structures. In addition to that, the EU is one of the largest stakeholders in the RCC, contributing one third of the RCC Secretariat’s annual budget. In order to maintain a quick link and an open communication channel with all the Brussels-based European and Euro-Atlantic institutions, the RCC Secretariat established its Liaison Office in Brussels, operational since the end of August 2008 and officially launched in October 2008.

Along similar lines, in order to ensure close and continuous cooperation between the RCC and the Presidency of the Council of the EU, including the incoming Presidencies, with a view to promoting the objectives of the RCC in the context of regional cooperation in South East Europe and the region’s European perspective within the Agendas of the Presidencies, the RCC Secretary General decided to establish the position of the Special Envoy of the Secretary

General of the RCC for Relations with the Presidency of the Council of the EU. The mandate of the Special Envoy was activated in mid-July 2008.

The Secretary General and the Deputy Secretary General/Head of Expert Pool of the RCC as well as the RCC Secretariat's Liaison Office in Brussels and the Special Envoy of the Secretary General of the RCC for Relations with the Presidency of the EU Council maintained regular contacts and dialogue with the representatives of the European Commission, in particular with the Directorate-General for Enlargement of the European Commission, at all levels. They also maintained contacts with other relevant services of the European Commission responsible for areas of relevance for the work of the RCC as well as with all the institutions of the EU including the European Parliament, the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, the EU Presidencies and Member States.

Intensive activities were undertaken in order to keep the former French, current Czech and the incoming Swedish EU Council Presidencies engaged and focused on South East Europe. Major efforts were invested in regularly liaising and discussing all important aspects of regional cooperation as well as raising the awareness to developments in South East Europe and to the need for urgent action and accelerated implementation of the envisaged EU measures for the region. Contacts were initiated and consultations held with representatives of the EU Presidencies in 2010, Spain and Belgium. These contacts confirmed that individual EU Presidencies would build on the conclusions and results of their predecessor and gave assurances of a continued engagement within South East Europe.

In his communications addressed to the former French, current Czech and incoming Swedish EU Presidencies, the RCC Secretary General stressed the necessity of the EU paying attention to South East Europe and regional cooperation structures it strived to foster as well as the importance of continuing with the European enlargement for the candidate and potential candidate countries. As one of the most dynamic emerging markets in Europe, South East Europe should be assisted by the EU and its institutions, through adequate assistance and support in relation to the efforts undertaken by the governments of South East Europe to carry out EU accession related reforms. The RCC Secretary General asked for the support of the EU in the elaboration of financial and other measures that could assist the Governments of South East Europe, both individually and collectively, in alleviating the crisis consequences.

The RCC Secretary General discussed with the incoming Swedish EU Presidency the preparation and holding of a conference on the Western Balkans to be organized by the Swedish Presidency of the EU Council and the European Commission in Brussels in December 2009. The conference will address issues related to the impact of financial crisis on the region, on the progress of the enlargement process as well as on regional cooperation, with a particular emphasis on the fields of energy, transport and development of infrastructure. The RCC and the European Policy Centre shall actively participate in the preparation of this important event.

In addition to that, the RCC Secretariat has established active cooperation with the European Commission, in particular with the relevant services of the Directorate-General for Enlargement, in the framework of the programming of the Multi-beneficiary IPA Programme and the identification of possible regional projects to be submitted for financing under this important pre-accession assistance instrument. The RCC Secretariat's representatives led by the Deputy Secretary General/Head of Expert Pool participated regularly in the IPA Multi-Beneficiary Coordination Meetings, one of which was hosted by the RCC Secretariat in Sarajevo in October 2008. This cooperation was utilized as an opportunity to commence the process of discussion among IPA beneficiaries and the RCC Secretariat on the development of possible models for elaboration of relevant projects to be potentially financed under the Multi-beneficiary IPA Programme. As a result of the discussions with the RCC National Coordinators from South East Europe on the one hand, and within the Multi-beneficiary IPA coordination meetings on the other, an RCC Project Portfolio containing 18 preliminary project ideas was produced and submitted to the European Commission in March 2009.

Networking between the RCC Secretariat, the European Commission and relevant IFI's has been strengthened through regular participation of the Deputy Secretary General of the RCC/Head of Expert Pool and Experts of the RCC Secretariat and its Liaison Office in Brussels at the meetings of the International Financial Institutions Advisory Group (IFI AG). These meetings provided the RCC with an opportunity to inform about its activities, new initiatives and projects. They also enabled an insight to the RCC into the priorities of other stakeholders and possibilities to formulate coordinated approaches and strategies for the benefit of the region.

The practice of attending high-level meetings of the EU related to the region of South East Europe (EU – Western Balkans Ministerial Forums in the formats of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Ministers responsible for Justice and Home Affairs) as well as briefing the EU Council Working Group on Western Balkans (COWEB) on the RCC activities and efforts was established and consolidated. These occasions enabled the RCC Secretariat representatives to present the most important current RCC activities and future plans, underlining the need for making visible results in the context of regional cooperation and the EU integration process. This exercise proved its merit in establishing additional channels of communication and cooperation between the RCC framework and EU Member States most of which are members of the RCC. The RCC Secretariat's Liaison Office also assisted in the organization of COWEB presentations of the Migration, Asylum, Refugees Return Initiative (MARRI) and the Southeast European Police Chiefs Association (SEPCA).

The RCC Secretary General held two meetings with the Member of the European Commission responsible for Enlargement Olli Rehn, in October 2008 and March 2009 in Brussels in order to discuss the modalities of cooperation as well as the involvement of the Commission in regional cooperation through the RCC framework.

These contacts secured the high-level support of the Commission for the pragmatic and project-oriented approach of the RCC in addressing the priority areas which enables the countries of

South East Europe to work together on development projects notwithstanding their still evident differences. This support was very much needed both for strengthening and sustaining genuine regional cooperation processes as well as for the establishment of a mechanism of permanent cooperation among the RCC Secretariat, the RCC members from South East Europe, the European Commission and IFIs, in preparing joint multinational regional projects. The region will additionally be assisted by the efforts of the European Commission and the IFIs to respond to the current social and economic difficulties in South East Europe, in particular regarding funding of the Crisis Response Package under IPA in the amount of 150 million EUR with additional 80 million EUR allocated under the IPA Multi-beneficiary 2009 for support to SMEs, energy efficiency and competitiveness as well as to bank sector supervision and regulation.

The measures and activities of the European Commission illustrate in concrete terms that the EU is committed to continue its engagement in South East Europe and the Western Balkans and deliver on the European perspective of the candidate and potential candidates.

Summing up the relations with all the institutions of the EU, we can say that the cooperation with the EU served as a platform for keeping the EU focus on the region of South East Europe particularly in the light of the global economic and financial crisis and other external and internal challenges the EU is facing. The consultations were also used for exchanging views on the ways for achieving visible results in the context of regional cooperation and the EU integration process as well as on the possibilities for cooperation between RCC and the EU, particularly for organizing joint RCC-EU Council Presidency events etc. As a result several major joint RCC-EU Council Presidency activities were agreed and organized (a Ministerial Conference on Developing Regional Research Strategy for Western Balkans held during the Czech Presidency of the EU Council, a conference on the impact of financial crisis on the region, the progress of the enlargement process as well as on regional cooperation, with a particular emphasis on the fields of energy, transport and development of infrastructure, to be organized during the Swedish Presidency of the EU Council)

Along these lines, the EU Council Presidencies' officials and other partners expressed positive assessment for the RCC Secretariat working activities and its engagement and consistently confirmed their full support for its future work directed towards fulfilling its regional cooperation and regional ownership priorities and goals.

The current Czech and incoming Swedish Presidency of the EU Council have confirmed that the region of South East Europe and particularly Western Balkans, shall be among the priority agenda items during their terms-in-office and that they will make substantial efforts for supporting concrete regional cooperation projects and for opening avenues for accelerating the EU integration processes, as well as for making tangible progress in the visa liberalization processes. Both EU current and incoming EU Council Presidency have made clear their intention to continue with the practice of inviting the RCC Secretary General to important events to be organized during the Presidency's term-of-office and to provide high-level participation at the most important events organized under the auspices of the South-East European Cooperation

Process (SEECF) and the RCC. High-level officials of Spain confirmed that they were going to build on the achievements and programs of their predecessors with regard to South East Europe and regional cooperation.

The general assessment is that the EU Council Presidencies have demonstrated their will and determination to invest concrete efforts in supporting regional cooperation in South East Europe and in accelerating the process of EU integration of the countries concerned. However the real and tangible progress will depend on the countries' reforms achievements, not forgetting the other very complex external and internal challenges the EU is facing. It is encouraging and promising that the EU Council Presidencies are keeping considerable focus on South East Europe and the Western Balkans by providing concrete support for the RCC activities and by assisting its efforts for attaining the set goals and priorities.

Finally, it could be concluded by saying that by pursuing active cooperation with the institutions of the EU, especially in identifying priorities to be addressed by the Multi-beneficiary IPA Programme and developed into regional projects, the RCC profiled itself as a key interlocutor and partner of the EU for matters relating to regional cooperation.

5) Cooperation with the SEECF Chairmanship-in-Office

The SEECF is the political umbrella of the RCC and the political voice of the region. According to the Strategic Work Programme of the RCC 2008 – 2009, in consultation with the SEECF Chairmanship-in-Office of the Republic of Moldova, the RCC assisted with preparing and coordinating the activities of the SEECF. The Secretary General and other members of the RCC Secretariat participated actively in all the SEECF activities including the Summit and ministerial meetings such as the Meeting of the SEECF Ministers of Foreign Affairs, SEECF Ministers of Justice and Home Affairs, SEECF Ministers of Health, Informal Meeting of the SEECF Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Meeting of the SEECF Speakers of Parliament and other high-level conferences as well as meetings of the SEECF Committee of Political Directors. In order to achieve synergy and efficient follow-up to the conclusions of the high-level meetings, the RCC maintained regular dialogue and political consultations with the SEECF Chairmanship-in-Office of the Republic of Moldova. The RCC will continue to work closely with the SEECF Chairmanships-in-Office in order to harness all available regional resources in an effort to propose joint strategies and mechanisms for addressing the challenges, especially the economic crisis and its possible impact on the political and social stability.

6) Regional presentations of the RCC and its activities in the capitals of the RCC members from South East Europe

The RCC Secretariat successfully carried out a number of presentations in RCC members from South East Europe in order to present its priorities, projects and activities to over 500

representatives of governments, business sector and civil society. This was an important opportunity for networking between the RCC Secretariat and national experts as well as for raising public awareness through media coverage of the events. The tour was organized in close cooperation with the RCC members from South East Europe and witnessed intensive interaction of the participants highlighting many ideas and proposals. A presentation for the institutions of the EU and other Brussels-based institutions is scheduled for 23 June 2009.

7) Coordination and streamlining of regional initiatives and structures

In accordance with the RCC Strategic Work Programme 2008 – 2009 and the Statute of the RCC, one of the tasks of the RCC Secretariat was to work on the establishment of structured and transparent relationships with taskforces and initiatives in South East Europe, with particular emphasis on the five priority areas of the RCC activities. The establishment of such structured relationships is aimed at the avoidance of duplication and overlapping of activities and has received support both from the RCC members from the region as well as from European and other international partners.

This process was launched by the Coordination Conference of South East Europe Initiatives on Justice and Home Affairs, held in Sarajevo on 15 and 16 September 2008. Another coordination meeting of relevant initiatives in South East Europe in the field of security cooperation was organized jointly by the RCC Secretariat and RACVIAC-Centre for Security Cooperation on 4 December 2008. After its meeting on 5 March 2009, the RCC Board exchanged views with representatives of the regional taskforces and initiatives which are operating under the RCC auspices or have regulated appropriate relationship and coordination of activities through specific arrangements with the RCC Secretariat. A list of initiatives and task forces is annexed to this Report.

In the same vein, the RCC started the process of institutional affiliation with regional initiatives relevant for the future effective activity of the RCC through signing of Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) or other forms of more targeted or topical formalized cooperation. So far, a MoU or similar agreement has been signed with the following initiatives: South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC) and the South East European Health Network. Agreements have been concluded and are ready to be signed between the RCC Secretariat and Southeast European Cooperative Initiative Regional Center for Combating Trans-border Organized Crime (SECI Center), Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative (RAI), MARRI, SEPCA and South Eastern Europe Prosecutors Advisory Group (SEEPAG).

Coordination and streamlining of regional taskforces and initiatives in South East Europe remains one of the most important tasks of the RCC Secretariat. The RCC Secretariat will also remain actively involved in providing assistance to the taskforces and initiatives in gaining access to political, technical and financial support required to fulfill their objectives.

8) Cooperation with other regional organizations, initiatives and structures

The RCC pursued cooperation with regional organizations, initiatives and structures such as the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative (AII), the Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) and the Central European Initiative (CEI), to name some of them. Since the geographic and thematic focus of these organizations and initiatives and the RCC overlap, it was deemed of importance and usefulness to explore possibilities for strengthening and streamlining cooperation. The preliminary discussions resulted in some joint activities and projects elaborated in more detail in the section of this Report on the RCC priority areas as well as participation in each other's high-level meetings. A MoU regarding cooperation between the RCC Secretariat and the CEI - Executive Secretariat was signed in May 2009 pursuant to the corresponding decision of the RCC Board.

9) Communication Strategy

The Communication Strategy of the RCC Secretariat, adopted by the Secretary General in April 2008, was designed to build the RCC public profile and shape the organization's place among the people and stakeholders in SEE. The goal is to establish understanding and awareness of the RCC mission to promote mutual cooperation and European and Euro-Atlantic integration of South East Europe in order to inspire development in the region to the benefit of its people. The communication has been tailored to demonstrate that joint strategic goals of the RCC members from South East Europe and their specific needs are mutually inclusive.

Concretely, the strategy comprised of: 1. establishing and maintaining regular contacts with journalists to encourage them to report on RCC activities in as positive a light as possible, as well as using various means of communication with them, such as press releases, statements, interviews, articles, press conferences, background meetings and briefings; 2. opening up thematic roundtables, conferences and seminars to the media; 3. providing and taking opportunities for outreach on RCC activities among the politicians, opinion-makers, think-tanks, students, academia, businessmen, etc.; 4. creating, in May 2008, and maintaining informative and updated RCC website to reach out to various publics via Internet; 5. designing and producing public information and visual identity materials, such as factsheets and flyers; 6. preparing and disseminating reports and other documents to targeted stakeholders; 7. organizing special events for the media and other publics, such as lectures by prominent public figures, panel discussion to mark the first RCC anniversary on 27 February 2009, annual reception, etc.

In implementing the communication strategy, the RCC Secretariat carried out its contacts with the public and the press in a friendly and open manner, bearing in mind the good reputation the RCC wants to build across the RCC area, as a leading organization for development issues in

South East Europe, which will make a visible difference. Thus, seriousness, professionalism, openness and transparency have been instrumental to achieving the set ambition.

III. Priority Areas of the RCC Activities

The five priority areas, representing the main direction of the RCC Secretariat's work are economic and social development; infrastructure and energy; justice and home affairs; security cooperation and building human capital and cross-cutting issues, including parliamentary cooperation. Under each of these objectives the RCC Secretariat, in particular its Expert Pool, focused on the following activities:

1) Economic and Social Development

General

During the first six months of its activity, the RCC Secretariat focused on developing working relationships with regional socioeconomic initiatives inherited from the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, as well as on making contacts with existing and potential international partners in the socioeconomic development realm. Thereafter, an annual work plan for the year 2009 was prepared and an initial project portfolio developed. They include topics ranging from public-private partnerships, female entrepreneurship and regional competitiveness, to employment policy and social dialogue. Throughout this period, the RCC Secretariat solidified its relationship with regional and international partners by co-hosting joint events.

Investment Facilitation/Business Climate

In the area of investment facilitation/business climate, the RCC Secretariat developed a strong working relationship with the OECD Investment Compact for Southeast Europe as well as the International Finance Corporation (IFC) Business Enabling Environment program. In September 2008, the RCC Secretariat hosted the OECD Investment Reform Index (IRI) 2009 kick-off meeting, where experts of the OECD briefed the economic teams of the RCC members from South East Europe on the intent and methodology of the new IRI – an event which received extensive media coverage throughout the region. The RCC Secretariat, working in collaboration with the OECD, also launched the OECD's new study "Defining and Strengthening Sector Specific Sources of Competitiveness in the Western Balkans," in October 2008. The study comprises the first phase of the European Commission-funded/OECD-implemented Regional Competitiveness project. The RCC Secretariat contributed to the development of the second (implementation) phase of the project by preparing a comprehensive overview of the ministries from South East Europe engaged in economic and human capital development, and their current initiatives aimed at improving competitiveness, upgrading skills, and developing an information society. The RCC Secretariat also entered into dialogue with IFC regarding the prospect of embracing its Network of South East Europe Policy Makers under its umbrella.

Following extensive discussions with a wide range of local and international partners (the Ministry of Transport Communications of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the UN ECE, the World Bank Institute and the Croatian Agency for Public Private Partnerships) in the second half of the year, the RCC Secretariat made

preparations for a ministerial level regional conference on Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) scheduled to take place in September 2009. Focusing on the prospects for developing strategic infrastructure networks, the conference will explore how PPPs might serve as a framework for attracting foreign direct investments (FDI). Three outcomes are expected: the garnering of political support for the PPP approach, the launching of a regional PPP expert network, and the promotion of a regional PPP capacity building program – a project in which the Croatian PPP Agency has volunteered to play a leading role.

The RCC Secretariat carried out the necessary research to produce a substantive conference agenda, secured the participation of all key international actors, successfully raised funds for the conference from a partner organization (UNDP), and has also developed a follow-up roadmap together with the Croatian Agency for PPPs. A co-hosting arrangement with the Ministry of Finance and Treasury of Bosnia and Herzegovina is expected to be secured in the near future.

Trade

In the realm of trade, the work of the RCC Secretariat contributed to the establishment of the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) 2006 Secretariat in Brussels in the summer of 2008.

In the month of October 2008, the RCC Secretariat actively participated in the first Regional Economic Forum of Parties to CEFTA 2006 organized under the auspices of the governments of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro as well as of UNMIK/Kosovo. The RCC Secretariat's proposals for enhanced regional cooperation – a number of which pertained to trade – constituted well over half of the conclusions of the Forum, which subsequently identified the RCC as one of its most significant contributors. Forum conclusions were sent to 900 addresses of the institutions and organizations operating in the parties to CEFTA 2006, including those directly responsible for regional cooperation.

Private Sector Dialogue

Throughout the year, the RCC Secretariat maintained close contacts with the South East Europe Business Advisory Council (BAC) attending its regular meetings and sharing information of regional economic developments and the needs of the business community. In March 2009, a representative of the RCC Secretariat accompanied BAC's business missions to Tirana and Podgorica. The attractiveness of the public private partnership model for future infrastructure development was clearly communicated at the time by Albanian and Montenegrin officials, and the RCC Secretariat intends to engage BAC as a private sector spokesperson at the ministerial PPP conference it intends to organize in September 2009 - thus helping governments to understand the private sector's requirements vis-à-vis potential entry into PPP arrangements. BAC in turn assisted the RCC Secretariat in making the relevant international contacts necessary for the successful organization of the conference.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Working in close cooperation with the UNDP, which hosts the Secretariat of the Electronic Southeast Europe (eSEE) initiative, the RCC Secretariat assumed an active role in the preparation of the initiative's quarterly meetings and hosted one of them in October 2008. This particular event was an opportunity to emphasize a number of implementation priorities from the eSEE Agenda Plus. Discussions are currently under way with the UNDP funded Secretariat of the eSEE initiative regarding the preparation of the next eSEE Ministerial Conference expected to take place toward the end of 2009. There is a pressing need to redefine some of the objectives and deadlines originally envisaged under the eSEE Agenda Plus – the initiative's implementation road map – which is expected to take place in the context of this high level event.

The meeting was held in conjunction with that of the Programme Advisory Committee of the new Centre for eGovernance Development (CeGD) to which the RCC Secretariat has lent extensive operational support since its establishment in the spring of 2008. The RCC Secretariat played an active advisory role vis-à-vis CeGD which faced a number of challenges in its relations with some key stakeholders. The RCC Secretariat also provided extensive assistance to CeGD in developing its annual program proposal aimed at securing funding for the Centre. The proposal subsequently met with success. The RCC Secretariat experts on Economic and Social Development have since become members of CeGD's Supervisory and Management Board, respectively, and provided substantive contributions to the Centre's operational procedures, strategic program, and annual work plan. A number of events foreseen in the work plan have been delivered.

In April 2009, the RCC Secretariat, together with the UNDP and Greece's INA Academy organized a one-day seminar on eGovernance attended by interested regional parties, mainly from government ministries. The RCC Secretariat has also made arrangements to host a workshop on the role of ICT in harnessing the potentials of South East Europe's scientific diaspora with Austria's Centre for Social Innovation. This event is scheduled to take place in June 2009.

Employment

The RCC Secretariat received its first exposure to the South East European Employment Network in June 2008 at which time it became clear that the Network was in a transitional phase. The declining engagement of international partners (who wish to see greater regional responsibility for the Network) necessitated RCC leadership. A major challenge for the RCC members from the region is to actively cooperate on the implementation of the conclusions of various past ministerial declarations as well as the International Labour Organization (ILO) sponsored Country Reviews of Employment Policy (CREPs).

The RCC Secretariat initially counted on strong technical support from relevant international partners, however, this has not been forthcoming, and attempts to organize a meeting of relevant international stakeholders failed. The RCC Secretariat subsequently determined to

prepare a work plan for the Network on its own. This is currently in progress and will be shared with international stakeholders prior to the Employment Network meeting which the RCC Secretariat plans to organize at the end of May 2009. The meeting, which is meant to revive the now latent Employment Network, will aim to have this proposed roadmap approved by its regional stakeholders (Labor Ministries and Employment Agencies) and to provide a long delayed opportunity for regional actors to share their employment-related accomplishments and challenges over the past year.

Social Dialogue

The onset of the global financial and economic crisis created a window of opportunity to bring regional employers' and trade union organizations around the idea of direct dialogue. The RCC Secretariat has been consulting with both sides concerning a regional social dialogue meeting to be held at the end of May 2009 where the two organizations would get an opportunity to agree on a set of joint crisis-related policy proposals which the RCC could endorse and forward to regional governments. The Friedrich Ebert Stiftung from Germany will be a partner in the preparation of this event.

Health

The past year was one of transition for the South East European Health Network which actively pursued the signing, by all its parties, of a MoU on the future of the Network, which paves the way for its regional ownership via a regionally located secretariat. The MoU was finally signed by all parties in the first quarter of 2009, and the Network will undertake the next steps in issuing a call for proposals for the seat of its secretariat. The RCC Secretariat will assist in the selection of the location through participation in a future selection committee. A MoU concerning the Network's future relationship with the RCC has also been signed committing the RCC to politically support the Network. It does not envisage direct fund-raising support for the Network's projects, but the RCC Secretariat will consider including some regional health programs into its portfolio to be shared with interested donors.

2) Infrastructure and Energy

General

During the initial part of the reporting period, the RCC Secretariat focused on stock taking, preparation of the Strategic Work Programme 2008-2009 and taking over of responsibilities from the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe (two handover meetings took place in Brussels and Sarajevo). The RCC Secretariat participated in the International IFI Advisory Group (IFI AG) Working Group on Energy and gave its contribution to profiling the Conclusions of the Group. Recognizing the role of sustainable use and management of water resources, the RCC Secretariat established communication with the International Sava River Basin Commission (ISRBC) and agreed on the future cooperation and joint preparation of the relevant events.

Regarding the bilateral communication with the RCC members from South East Europe, the RCC Secretariat assisted the Ministry for Foreign Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina concerning the development of Energy Strategy and the accession to relevant regional energy organizations as well as the Ministry for Development of Montenegro in relation to the establishment of an Energy Efficiency Agency and accession to relevant energy organizations.

The RCC Secretariat concentrated on strengthening relations with the key infrastructure partners i.e. Energy Community Secretariat (ECS), South East Europe Transport Observatory (SEETO) and Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) in order to support an integrated approach, multidisciplinary projects and complementary up to date activities. In that respect, the organization of a transport event dedicated to road safety primarily with UN ECE and SEETO was discussed. Additionally a preliminary concept for a Parliamentarians' workshop that would gather representatives of regional parliamentary committees dealing with energy issues, alongside the ECS active participation was initiated.

During the reporting period all relevant initiatives, task forces and other partners were offered to cooperate in order to prepare Preliminary Project Ideas (PPIs) to be supported through Multi-beneficiary IPA or other potential donors explaining the requirements for these applications.

Due to a multidisciplinary character of the infrastructure activities in relation to both preparation of the events and relevant PPIs, a variety of stakeholders have been contacted and included in its developing alongside the active participation of the European Commission.

Environment

During the last quarter of 2008, activities of the RCC Secretariat focused on cooperation with the REC. This cooperation primarily related to the preparation and realization of The First Thematic Ministerial Conference ``Combating Climate Change in South East Europe`` in Sarajevo on 14 November 2008 within the agreed framework program Roadmap for Environmental Cooperation in South East Europe. In addition to this event, within the previously mentioned framework program, three thematic high level events were planned to be tentatively co-organized on a quarterly basis and hosted by the RCC Secretariat, namely: Natura 2000 in South East Europe, Multilateral cooperation on environmental issues through Multilateral Environmental Agreements in South East Europe and Priority environmental infrastructure investments in South East Europe. The RCC Secretariat hosted and contributed to a positive output of the Preparatory Expert Meeting that preceded the Ministerial Conference as well as of the Ministerial Conference that resulted in the adoption by the Ministers responsible for Environment of the Republic of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, the Republic of Serbia and The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, of a Joint Ministerial Statement and Climate Change Framework Action Plan for Adaptation.

The RCC Secretariat also participated in various regional events as a result of the established communication and agreed efforts to enhance regional cooperation (UN ECE ``Energy Week``,

Priority Environmental Investment Program (PEIP) Regional Meeting for Senior Officials from South East Europe and Donors). Participation in the UN ECE ``Energy Week`` was used for additional consultations with the UN ECE Transport and Environmental Divisions` representatives in relation to the RCC Secretariat`s intention to organize events in the area of transport and transboundary water cooperation, respectively.

Cooperation with the REC included the preparation of PPIs in relation to an Inventory of pressures and impacts in the Drina River Basin and transboundary cooperation in the Sava River Basin as well as the Set up of the accident emergency warning system within the Drina River Basin. These PPIs are being prepared in accordance with the Multi-beneficiary IPA Programme template requirements in order to be eligible for the Multi-beneficiary IPA support.

Cooperation with the UNECE Water Convention Secretariat, the Global Water Partnership and the Sava Commission focused on the preparation of a Water Conference held on 18-20 May 2009 that included the following parts: (i) a part on strategic issues for the whole of transboundary waters in the region including three themes (the legal and institutional basis for cooperation, climate change and its impacts on water related sectors, and multipurpose use of transboundary waters - how to reconcile different interests); (ii) a part to work on the second assessment of transboundary waters where participants will be divided in three groups (Adriatic, Black Sea, Aegean Sea) and discuss issues basin by basin; and (iii) a concluding part on the way forward with a summary of the workshop and perspectives from the European Commission and donors (World Bank, Global Environment Fund (GEF) etc.). While added value of the second part would be to ensure concrete output that would be presented at the fifth meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention in November 2009 and finally at the next Ministerial Conference ``Environment for Europe``, the first and the third part would be primarily important to back regional cooperation and learn more about the position of donor community and IFIs to support regional cooperation and related projects, respectively.

Collaboration with the UNDP Regional Office correlated to the preparation of the PPIs concerning biodiversity protection and ecosystem services as well as to the establishment of a Regional Forum and the implementation of the part of the Climate Change Framework Action Plan for Adaptation that relates to coastal zone and tourism.

Transport

Taking into account the EU policy towards inland waterways development and SEETO future plans to increase the role of this transport mode, the RCC Secretariat met Sava Commission and World Bank representatives in order to support the full realization of a Detailed Design for Sava River Waterway. Participation in the Sava Commission Workshop on Environmentally Sustainable Management and Maintenance of the Inland Waterways was a part of the overall RCC Secretariat`s activities to give more importance to inland waterways as an economically effective and environmentally friendly mode of transport.

The RCC Secretariat contributed to the Workshop on the Follow-up of the Joint Statement on Inland Navigation and Environmental Sustainability in the Danube River where the integrated approach when planning and developing infrastructure projects, particularly transport ones, was emphasized as well as to the Railway Reform Workshop where the approximation and harmonization requirements for the SEETO participants in the area of Railway Network Access were presented.

The RCC Secretariat participated in the Partnership for Improvement of Danube Infrastructure and Navigation - 7th Danube River Technical Meeting with main objectives to overview new developments concerning policies and decisions regarding Danube-wide sustainable development and strategies and to review and update the status of ongoing Danube projects and proposals. During the event the RCC Secretariat stressed the need for promoting an integrated approach when planning and developing Danube infrastructure projects primarily establishing cooperation between ECS, SEETO and REC.

Energy

Taking into account huge infrastructure investment needs in the region, particularly in relation to the power sector and the necessity to speed up decision-making process concerning new electricity investments, the RCC Secretariat took part in the Energy Community Investment Conference. The RCC Secretariat participated in some other official events organized by the Energy Community Secretariat as well. These events included meetings of Energy Community institutions (Energy Community Gas Forum, Energy Community Electricity Forum, Permanent High level Group and Ministerial Council).

As a follow up of the Staff-to-Staff meeting with the UN ECE experts held in the beginning of June 2008, concrete cooperation on the preparation of the energy efficiency project proposal started with the representatives of the UN ECE EE21 Project, Network of Associations of Local Authorities in South-East Europe (NALAS), European Foundation for the Sustainable Development of the Regions (FEDRE) and Regional Network for Efficient Use of Energy and Water Resources for Southeastern Europe (RENEUER). The RCC Secretariat invited the ECS to join in this endeavor considering that it should have a vital role in the regional energy project proposals development and monitoring its implementation. ECS offered the UN ECE to present a project proposal when fully developed at one of the incoming Energy Efficiency Task Force meetings.

The representatives of the RCC Secretariat participated in the workshop under the title of Local Sustainability and Actions in South East Europe. This was part of the overall efforts to enhance cooperation with the local authorities and civil society actors in the areas of infrastructure and energy considering that the ``bottom – up`` approach provided through this cooperation is extremely relevant to complement efforts on higher levels. Participating in the above mentioned workshop, the RCC Secretariat's representatives gave lectures, presented the organization and discussed possible areas of cooperation with other participants in the workshop.

The RCC Secretariat initiated a meeting between the UN ECE and the ECS representatives pointing out their complementarities, mutual benefits and possibilities for cooperation particularly concerning local energy development, municipal energy planning and energy efficiency. Participation in the Energy Community Energy Efficiency Task Force meetings was also used to promote dealing with municipal energy projects that have huge potential for replication both nationally and regionally and that can guarantee energy security alongside climate change mitigation only if massively implemented.

The RCC Secretariat and the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina organized the workshop "Parliaments – Support to Harmonized Energy Reforms in Southeast Europe" in Sarajevo on 15 December 2008. The workshop brought together parliamentarians from the parliamentary committees dealing with energy issues from South East Europe and representatives of the European Commission, International Energy Agency (IEA), UNDP, ECS, World Bank and UN ECE. The event discussed energy issues in a comprehensive way and broader context of the challenges South East Europe is facing and proved that such events are very important for raising the awareness of the needed energy reforms, facilitating law making process and supporting the parliamentarians to oversee their governments' activities. The event concluded that it was essential to organize a sequence of tailor made workshops for representatives of Parliaments and their technical support services focusing on specific energy sector needs and priorities of RCC members from South East Europe. In that respect, it was agreed with the ECS representatives to prepare up to three events during 2009 that would address specific requirements of parliamentarians from the region concerning the energy sector reforms and social implications of these reforms. Taking into account the schedule of elections in the RCC Members from South East Europe, the RCC Secretariat approached Serbian Parliament in order to start the sequence of events.

The RCC Secretariat participated in the 12th Energy Community Permanent High Level Group meeting and backed ECS plan to deal more with energy efficiency and renewables ("greening" the Energy Community).

GTZ Open Regional Fund for Energy in South East Europe representatives were contacted in order to support development of preliminary project ideas in the area of energy, particularly energy efficiency and renewables that would be submitted for support to other donors and the Multi-beneficiary IPA.

Due to the recent gas crisis the RCC Secretariat was contacted to share its position on the energy crisis, energy security, energy efficiency and climate change and invited to participate in meetings and other events in order to deliver presentations and contribute to discussions (Regional Energy Security and Energy Efficiency Conference, Energy Crisis and Climate Change – Challenges for Politics and Business in South East Europe and 63rd Session of the UN ECE).

Based on the existing CEI infrastructure - already established network of CEI National Energy Focal Points, continuous cooperation between the RCC Secretariat and the CEI will result in

launching an initiative on sustainable energy development in the region after the signing of a MoU on cooperation between the RCC Secretariat and the CEI - Executive Secretariat. At the possible next stage of the initiative development other relevant stakeholders would be included as well.

3) Justice and Home Affairs

General

The level of harmonization of national activities with the RCC Strategic Work Programme 2008-2009 and the EU Multi-beneficiary IPA Programme priorities has been assessed during the June 2008 Meeting of the RCC National Coordinators from South East Europe. The evaluation identified as priorities for the RCC members from South East Europe and the regional organizations and initiatives active in the field of Justice and home affairs the following areas: strengthening legal and judicial cooperation in criminal cases; harmonization of national legislations; synchronization with the European and international tools of criminal procedure; rapid exchange of information between the competent authorities; better use of SECI Center's capacity for greater coordination of the investigating authorities.

The state of affairs in each of the six regional organizations and initiatives in the field of justice and home affairs has been analyzed at the initiative of the RCC Secretariat. In order to identify measures enhancing their coordination and coherence, as well as to avoid overlapping, fragmentation and duplication, the RCC Secretariat organized in September 2008, in Sarajevo, the First Coordination Conference of the Regional Initiatives and International Organizations active in Justice and Home Affairs area in South East Europe. The 'Matrix' of the regional organizations and initiatives active in justice and home affairs in South East Europe is posted on the RCC website. At the EU – Western Balkans Ministerial Forum on Justice and Home Affairs held in Zagreb in autumn 2008, the French Presidency of the EU Council marked the important role that the RCC played in facilitating the implementation of international and regional legal framework on police, law enforcement and judicial cooperation, streamlining of regional organizations, and harmonization of national legislations in the field of criminal law with the EU regulations and standards.

Based on the above mentioned assessments and analyses, in close cooperation with the European and other international partners, the RCC Secretariat was actively pursuing actions improving the process of cooperation among national authorities, streamlining and raising the visibility of the relevant regional initiatives, enhancing their contribution and performance on judicial cooperation.

The RCC Secretariat contributed to the establishment of a structured regional mechanism, a system of direct, quick and constant circulation of information, which integrates cooperation needs of national law enforcement agencies, police departments, prosecution offices and judiciary with those of regional and international organizations. This integrated mechanism of

cooperation and coordination at EU, regional and national levels, able to influence and speed up the accession process should be fully functional by the end of 2009.

Apart from regular meetings at high political level in the justice and home affairs area, expert-level cooperation has been enhanced; the activity of liaison police and custom officers, the prosecutors' networks have been improved; a holistic approach on enhancing regional cooperation among police, law enforcement officers, prosecutors and judges has been addressed; a number of regional project ideas have been drafted in close coordination with national authorities and regional organizations; consultations are underway relating to the drafting of a South East Europe Multiannual Regional Strategy on Justice and Home Affairs.

The RCC Secretariat is currently addressing the following three processes as regional priorities: harmonization and implementation of the legislative framework ("*acquis communautaire*"); institutional and functional standardization; enhancing the forms and methods of cooperation.

Agreements have been concluded and are ready to be signed between RCC Secretariat and SECI Center, RAI, MARRI, SEPCA, SEEPAG, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

The RCC Secretariat is directly supporting the implementation of three regional normative documents: SEECP Ministers' of Justice Memorandum on Legal and Judicial Guarantees against Unlawful Processing of Personal Data and SEECP Ministers' of Home Affairs Common Declaration regarding the Strengthening of Cooperation in Combating Cybercrimes, both adopted in Chisinau in 2008 as well as Police Cooperation Convention signed in Vienna in 2006.

The RCC Secretariat is involved in ongoing projects such as: EU Project on the Establishment of International Law-Enforcement Coordination Units (ILECUs Project); Anti-corruption Consultancy and the Integrity and Resistance to Corruption of the Criminal Judicial System in South East European Countries, both in cooperation with RAI; the continuation of the implementation of the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) I-24/7 Border Checking Point as a component of the Bled Stolen Vehicle Process; incorporating the work on Anti-corruption in OECD Investment Reform Index 2009; Visa Regime Assessment among SEECP Participating States – a Project proposed by the SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office of the Republic of Moldova with MARRI partnership.

Through its partnership in ILECUs Project, the RCC Secretariat became an active player in the process of harmonizing national legislations in the field of criminal law, and synchronizing the use of the European and international tools of criminal investigation and prosecution.

Combating organized crime

The RCC Secretariat experts and representatives of SEPCA and SECI Center participated and had informative presentations in meetings such as COWEB and EU Horizontal Working Group on Drugs in 2009 in Brussels.

In key areas, such as criminal justice and transnational organized crime, the RCC Secretariat worked closely with the UNODC to promote the rule of law and cooperation among RCC members from South East Europe. The UNODC Regional Programme 2009-2011 “Promoting the Rule of Law and Human Security in South East Europe”, was launched during the Regional High Level Conference organized in Belgrade in March 2009. The RCC Secretariat, RAI, SECI Center, SEPCA and SEEPAG are strategic partners in the implementation of the activities envisaged by the Regional Programme in the three main thematic areas: organized crime and illicit trafficking; justice and integrity; drugs and HIV. In Belgrade the participating countries of South East Europe adopted a Joint Statement committing to work together and in close partnership with relevant regional and international organizations. The RCC Secretariat experts attended the UNODC meeting and workshop involving judges, prosecutors and law enforcement officers specialized in the area of trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants.

Strengthening the role of the Bucharest – based SECI Center is one of the RCC strategic priorities. In 2009, the RCC Secretariat and SECI Center finalized the discussions to formalize the cooperation and to consolidate their relationship in the areas considered of great importance for combating organized crime, such as: Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre (SELEC) Convention signature, ratification and implementation;; setting up of partnerships with the European Police Office (EUROPOL) and European Agency for the Management of Operation Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the EU (Frontex) on the basis of a provided legal text; strengthening the collaboration with the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), as well as with the World Customs Organization (WCO) and the INTERPOL; finalization of the Organized Crime Threat Assessment for South East European Region (OCTA-SEE); SECI Center’s access to the European Commission’s and other donors' funds.

Prosecutors’ cooperation

The RCC Secretariat is working on the transformation of the South Eastern Europe Prosecutors’ Advisory Group (SEEPAG) into a more visible, effective and efficient network of experienced prosecutors, able to provide real operational support, legal assistance, advice and guidance to SECI Center’s liaisons officers in the investigation of trans-border organized crime.

To avoid overlapping, duplication and fragmentation at regional level, the RCC Secretariat experts, with the SECI Center’s and the Council of Europe’s assistance, was assisting SEEPAG and Prosecutors’ Network in South-Eastern Europe (PROSECO) to develop contacts and to initiate regional coordination.

The RCC Secretariat contributed to the organization of the 2009 Third World Summit of Prosecutors General, Attorneys General and Chief Prosecutors, held in Bucharest. The main theme of the Prosecutors’ General World Summit was: “Prosecutor General – Pillar of the Contemporary Criminal Justice System”. The world summit provided a unique opportunity for Prosecutors General to address, at the highest level, issues of specific interest or concern for criminal justice systems which are in the process of transition and reform. A permanent

Secretariat of the Prosecutors General's World Summit, financed by Romania, has been established in Bucharest and will closely cooperate with the International Association of Prosecutors (IAP), the UNODC and the RCC Secretariat. On this occasion, the Office of the Romanian Prosecutor General, IAP and the RCC Secretariat initiated consultations on organizing a regional annual meeting (conference or forum) of the Prosecutors General from South East Europe.

Fight against corruption

With respect to the fight against corruption the RCC members from South East Europe, assisted by RAI and the RCC Secretariat, increased their common engagement on prevention and countering corruption.

At the 2008 RAI Steering Group Meeting in Chisinau, senior representatives appointed by the Governments noted that all the countries ratified the UN Convention on fighting corruption and some of them already implemented its provisions into national legislation.

Corruption related to public and private sector has been addressed. RAI and the RCC Secretariat experts together with national representatives focused on the tools to detect and investigate corruption in public procurement, especially 'red flags' as a new instrument taken from the practice of international organizations and investment banks.

Strengthening the rule of law through improved integrity and capacity of justice systems have also been considered as essential prerequisites for effective protection of human rights and economic development. In 2009, the RCC Secretariat and RAI started the implementation of two projects approved by the RAI Steering Group: Anti-corruption Consultancy and the Survey on Integrity and Resistance to Corruption of the Criminal Judicial System in the Countries of South East Europe, which is financed by the United States of America.

The RCC Secretariat's proposal on a Regional network of (independent) specialized anti-corruption agencies, a project idea developed by the RCC Secretariat and RAI, has been included into the Multi-beneficiary IPA Programme 2010 project cycle.

The RCC Secretariat continued to assist RAI in taking measures ensuring: sustainability, achievement of practical results, fostering the impact following the dissemination of anti-corruption best practice and lessons learned and identifying new priorities such as combating high level corruption more efficiently.

Migration, asylum and refugees

Legal and illegal migration, as the connection between migration and development, including the issue of brain drain, are considered strong regional priorities.

Peoples and governments in South East Europe attach great importance to the perspective of the visa regime liberalization. The progress in this area is dependent on the implementing of

major reforms such as: strengthening the rule of law, combating organized crime, corruption and illegal migration, enhancing the administrative capacity in border control and documents security.

MARRI, assisted by the RCC Secretariat, enhanced its capacities to work closer with the European Commission, and to complement the EU efforts towards the visa facilitation process and furthermore to have the visa liberalization. In December 2008, MARRI had a presentation for the European Commission. In February 2009, MARRI, together with the representatives of the RCC Secretariat, was invited by the Czech Presidency to brief COWEB, where the relations between MARRI and the RCC were discussed as a very important and positive aspect.

The RCC Secretariat experts are advocating MARRI in achieving compliance with the European Commission IPA Multi-beneficiary Programme project "Migration and socio-economic development in the Western Balkans".

The cooperation in the region has been strengthened; also the trust between EU agencies and law enforcement agencies of the countries of the region has increased. The EU Pact on Migration and Asylum should become a crucial instrument for the RCC members from South East Europe.

The 2009 Seminar on "Citizenship Legislation and Practices-Overview of the state of Affairs in MARRI Member States" organized in Tirana, attended by the RCC Secretariat and SEPCA representatives, stressed the common interest of the region to harmonize national legislation on citizenship with EU standards, and stated that MARRI activities contribute to the consolidation of regional cooperation in the area of migration.

Police and law enforcement cooperation

The RCC Secretariat participated in developing a new regional cooperation structure, the Secretariat of the Police Cooperation Convention (PCC) for South East Europe located in Ljubljana, which started its activity on 1 September 2008. The PCC Secretariat has been set up to organize the implementation and to draft guidelines, manuals and model agreements for the Convention to become effective. The PCC provides a comprehensive basis and an appropriate legal framework to police regional judicial operations. The RCC Secretariat actively supported the recognition of the PCC as an important legal framework for judicial cooperation.

A key objective for the RCC Secretariat related to SEPCA was to facilitate the continuation of the programs on Organized Crime Training Network (OCTN), the INTERPOL I-24/7 IT system connecting border control points, and the Crime Analysis project aiming to create national and regional exchange of data related to organized crime.

To secure the continuation of the Stability Pact's initiative I-24/7 Main Border Checking Point Project, INTERPOL organized in 2008, in Lyon, a donor's meeting with the participation of the RCC Secretariat and SEPCA. For the implementation of the project second phase the

participants of the meeting requested the RCC to provide further support and to raise awareness in the ministries and parliaments of the beneficiary countries, and recommended that the World Bank and Association of European Insurance Companies should be approached.

Organized by the RCC Secretariat and SEPCA, the 2009 Stolen Vehicles Crime Conference gathered specialized police and border officers representatives from INTERPOL, EUROPOL, European and international organizations who shared information, exchanged best practices and discussed National Action Plans as well as future steps to be taken to improve national and regional regulations and activities in fighting stolen vehicle crime.

The RCC Secretariat together with the Austrian Ministry of Interior, and its partners, Slovenia and Romania, commenced the preparation for the implementation of the European Commission CARDS Regional Programmes 2005 regarding the establishment of the International Law Enforcement Coordination Units – National Focal Points (ILECUs). ILECU Project involves as beneficiaries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia and The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Each ILECU will comprise EUROPOL, INTERPOL, SECI Center contact points, bilateral liaison officers, and police cooperation contact points according to the Schengen Convention, Sirene bureaux (preparedness only), Customs, Eurojust, European Judicial Network, Prosecutor's Networks, Border Police, Frontex and OLAF.

The main RCC Secretariat objectives in ILECUs Project are: to maintain strong cooperation between the Western Balkan beneficiaries and the international organizations; to ensure ILECUs continuation, sustainability and thus its long-term existence; to secure the synergies with other projects and that no duplication of efforts will occur; to ensure that the legal basis formed by the provisions of the PCC is introduced in this project and close cooperation with SEPCA, SEEPAG and SECI Center is in place; to explore the extension of the Project to the Republic of Moldova.

The RCC Secretariat actively participated in the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Border Security Cooperation in Southeast Europe held in 2009 in Belgrade. The Conference, opened by the Serbian President, was attended by nine ministers of home affairs and other high-level representatives. Several documents were signed: Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina signed bilateral protocols on organizing joint patrols along their borders; Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina signed an agreement on joint border checks at border crossings; Montenegro and The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia signed an agreement on dual citizenship; police representatives from Serbia and Hungary signed an agreement on cooperation between units for fighting organized crime. The Joint Declaration signed by the Ministers from South East European countries envisages to achieve, until 2012, full compliance with EU standards and the implementation of best EU practices.

The RCC Secretariat initiated direct cooperation with the Council of Europe in the field of Cybercrime. The RCC Secretariat's experts attended the 2009 OCTOPUS Interface Conference, Cooperation against Cybercrime, organized in Strasbourg in March 2009. On this occasion, the

RCC Secretariat and the Council of Europe have identified complementarities and synergies between the second phase of the Council of Europe Global Project on Cybercrime and the RCC Secretariat's Cybercrime Project Idea.

Close coordination and periodical exchange of information between SEPCA and the RCC Secretariat have been established, giving SEPCA more visibility and assuring continuous political support. SEPCA plays an important role in police cooperation through projects and actions coordinated at the level of police managers.

The RCC Secretariat is encouraging regional coordination and focus on drugs research. Given the fact that there are no regional organizations in South East Europe dealing specifically with the issues of drugs demand and harm reduction, drug addiction and the social aspects of the abuse of narcotics, Croatia proposed the creation of a new initiative under the auspices of the RCC. The project proposal for setting up a Regional Office of „South East European Drugs Coordination“(SEEDC), was elaborated in order to receive support and has been introduced in the RCC Projects Portfolio.

4) Security Cooperation

General

Having accomplished the smooth transition from the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe in respect of the functioning task forces and initiatives - Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Initiative for South Eastern Europe (DPPI SEE) and South Eastern and Eastern European Clearing House for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC), the RCC Secretariat focused on strengthening their regional ownership and identifying the needs for further deepening regional defense and security cooperation. A coordination meeting of initiatives active in the area of security cooperation in South East Europe was organized jointly by the RACVIAC – Centre for Security Cooperation and the RCC Secretariat in December 2008. The meeting provided for a forum for discussion of activities and possibilities of enhancement of cooperation and coordination. DPPI SEE and SEESAC clearly expressed that they would continue operating under the umbrella of the RCC. RACVIAC-Centre for Security Cooperation affirmed its independence from the RCC framework, stressing at the same time readiness to cooperate with the RCC and its Secretariat.

The Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative for South Eastern Europe (DPPI SEE)

DPPI SEE went through a transition period with the aim to transform the DPPI SEE Secretariat into an entity affiliated to the RCC in accordance with the “Memorandum of Understanding on the Institutional Framework of the DPPI SEE”. The RCC Secretariat offered to the DPPI SEE full support - expert, technical and political - to develop a Strategy and Action plan, successfully addressing legal and administrative issues and developing Working procedures of DPPI SEE. The RCC Secretariat's efforts concentrated on further institutionalizing the Initiative, building its capacity and expanding the supported programs and projects which reflect the expectations for

transforming it in to an upgraded regionally owned centre for disaster preparedness and prevention. The RCC Secretariat provided DPPI SEE with full support and facilitated contacts with international donor community. The development of working, mutually beneficial relations and complementary programs with other international institutions especially the EU, UNDP and the World Bank are a significant part of the RCC work. In this respect, in cooperation with DPPI SEE, the RCC Secretariat provided assistance to the UNDP in drafting a Regional Program on Disaster Risk Reduction in South East Europe – a grant application form submitted to the European Commission. The project aims to building capacity in disaster risk reduction through regional cooperation in South East Europe for the period 2009-2010.

Southeastern and Central Europe Catastrophe Insurance Facility (SECE-CRIF)

In cooperation with the World Bank and the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN ISDR), the RCC Secretariat took active part in the creation of a Southeastern and Central Europe Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility (SECE-CRIF). SECE CRIF will be set up as a genuine public-private partnership whose main objectives are to facilitate the development of a catastrophe insurance market in South East Europe and thereby provide access for homeowners and SMEs to affordably priced (but not subsidized!) catastrophe insurance. It is envisaged that the program will start off by providing coverage to the countries of South East Europe but will soon extend its reach to countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Following two conferences on the establishment of the SECE CRIF, jointly organized by the World Bank, the UN/ISDR and the RCC Secretariat, seven RCC members from the region have expressed interest in the initiative – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Montenegro and Serbia. Interested countries will submit their comments on the draft founding legal documents to RCC Secretariat; undertake all necessary steps to prepare the CRIF founding documents for signature by the designated government representatives at a Global UN Summit on Disaster Risk Reduction in Geneva on 17 June 2009 and ratify the signed CRIF founding documents within 3-5 months from the date of their signing. The World Bank is looking into the possibility of establishing a special lending SECE CRIF regional facility that could help the member countries to finance their equity contributions to the project. The World Bank will, in cooperation with RCC Secretariat and UN ISDR, work closely with the European Commission and other donors to identify other potential sources of funding for countries' equity contributions.

South East Europe Firefighting Regional Center (SEEFREC)

A project on establishing a South East Europe Firefighting Regional Center (SEEFREC) was developed in coordination with the DPPI SEE and supported by the World Bank and the UN ISDR. The project outline was sent to the RCC National Coordinators from South East Europe for consideration by the relevant national authorities. After receiving confirmation of preliminary interest for participation in the project from four RCC members from South East Europe, the Secretariat outlined the planned activities. The RCC Board will be asked to approve the project and the RCC Board members other than regional ones will be asked for their eventual interest to provide financial contributions to the SEEFREC project. A draft Agreement on the project will be prepared, with the assistance from independent contracted experts, possibly by the end of

June 2009, to be presented to the participants in SEEFREC for their approval and adoption. On the basis of the contributions received from the RCC members from the region, the project will be further developed and discussed in detail at a Regional Conference which will be organized under the RCC auspices in July 2009. The positive outcome of this Conference will be followed by the Inauguration Conference of SEEFREC. The constitution of the Managing Board and beginning of the appointment procedures for SEEFREC are expected in autumn 2009.

Non-proliferation of small arms and light weapons

After signing the new agreement between the RCC Secretariat and the UNDP extending the scope of activities of the SEESAC and transforming it into a community violence prevention conceptual approach, a concrete project was drafted, signed and funded by Norway for 2009. Joint activities with SEESAC were planned and full support is offered to UNDP in further fundraising for this Initiative. In February 2009, in cooperation with UNDP, a selection panel was organized and a new SEESAC Team Leader selected and appointed. Upon request by UNDP and SEESAC, the RCC Secretariat has brought to the attention of the RCC Board the issue of the necessity of initiating the process for transforming SEESAC into a fully-fledged regionally-owned initiative by setting up an institutional mechanism for receiving financial contributions from the countries of the region and distributing them to the regional initiatives including SEESAC. This mechanism could be in the form of a trust fund where the countries from the region can transfer earmarked and non-earmarked funds for regional activities.

Defence and security cooperation

In cooperation with the Ministry of Defence of Bulgaria a joint initiative is being undertaken on organizing the first meeting of Defence Policy Directors and International Cooperation Directors of the Ministries of Defence of South East European countries that will take place in Sofia on 21 and 22 May 2009. Representatives of the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, as well as representatives from NATO International Staff are invited. This meeting intends to foster networking, building relationships, and strengthening trust as a basis for furthering regional security cooperation in the defence area. In an informal discussion delegations will be expected to identify requirements for enhancing transnational/multinational defence cooperation capabilities, to propose initiatives to meet possible expectations, and formulate techniques and capabilities to improve the region-wide transnational defense cooperation efforts. If the meeting confirms the interest of the RCC members from the region for the continuation of the dialogue of the Defence Policy Directors from South East Europe on a permanent basis, this will represent a platform and basis for the institutionalization of this format of meeting under the auspices of the RCC.

Consultations with the COWEB Coordinator in the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU and with the Director of Intelligence of the EU Council Military Staff continued through the RCC Liaison Office in Brussels. An outline of the first meeting of the Heads of Military Intelligence Agencies of South East Europe was agreed upon. The RCC Secretariat is in the stage of identifying an RCC member from the region to be the co-organizer and host of the event. At the

next stage the project idea will be offered to the relevant institutions of the RCC members from South East Europe for consideration.

Consultations with relevant regional and international partners

Mutually acceptable and beneficial dialogue was established and further developed with the major stakeholders in the regional defence and security cooperation, in particular with South East European Defense Ministerial (SEDM), Geneva Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), NATO, OSCE and others. The RCC Secretariat's efforts focused on avoiding possible duplication of activities which were well accepted and supported by all organizations with regional outreach. Specific proposals were made to SEEDM for cooperation in disaster management, defence industry conversion project development and the South-Eastern Europe Brigade (SEEBRIG) involvement in disaster relief operations in South East Europe.

5) Building Human Capital and Cross-Cutting Issues, including parliamentary cooperation

General

In the first months of the last year, the RCC focused its work on taking over from the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe and continuing as well as advancing activities in respective fields. The RCC Secretariat managed to build a strong network of contacts both in the region and with international organizations and EU Member States. The activities were focused primarily on the field of education, research, science, and culture, while activities in parliamentary cooperation were also followed in accordance with its over-arching standing.

Education

In the field of education, the RCC Secretariat established contacts with the Task Force Fostering and Building Human Capital of the RCC chaired by Romania and co-chaired by Austria and Croatia. The RCC Task Force provides cooperation and coordination framework for its founding members in the field of human resources with different national institutions responsible for education in South East Europe as well as with the Education Reform Initiative of South East Europe. The RCC Secretariat is a member and participates in the meetings and coordinates its activities with the Task Force.

The RCC Secretariat is included in the Task Force Fostering Building Human Capital Mobility Program for Capacity-Building in Regional Cooperation Management. The first participant in this program visited the RCC Secretariat in the period 2-9 November 2008. The program is designed as a support measure to avoid potential lack of mid-level civil servants who are acquainted with and capable of managing regional activities and programs in education, science and research, and acting as contact points for the existing networks of cooperation.

The RCC Secretariat actively participated in Preparatory Meetings for the Conference on "Fostering and Building Human Capital for Sustainable Knowledge Societies of the South East Europe", which was organized by the Task Force Building Human Capital in Bucharest on 6 and

7 March 2009. Conference participants were representatives of governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and academic community from the region as well as from the donor community. The Conference provided an in-depth analysis of experience of building human capital in the region of South East Europe and challenges to be met, from the perspective of EU priorities and beneficiary societies. Special emphasis was given to the Regional Research Strategy for the Western Balkan Countries and integration of the Western Balkans to the European Research Area. Thematic workshops were held devoted to human capital contribution to regional development, effective policies for building human capital, fostering human capital for labor market needs, competitiveness and sustainable development.

Good cooperation was established with the European Policy Centre (EPC), which invited the representative of the RCC Secretariat to participate in the Balkans Forum Roundtable on Student Mobility in the Balkans held in Brussels on 12 February 2009. Following the European Commission's Communication on the Western Balkans in March 2008, which emphasized visa facilitation and Erasmus Mundus scholarships as important tools for enhancing people-to-people contacts and reconciliation between the peoples of the Western Balkans, the EPC Roundtable was devoted to student mobility and other inclusive policies that offer opportunities to young people, as crucial steps on the path towards closer integration with the EU.

At the IFI AG Working Group on Social Sectors held on 17 June 2008, the RCC Secretariat presented its main activities related to building human capital and took part in the discussion on related issues in the context of adopted framework of close cooperation between the RCC and IFI AG. Several new issues were raised like full participation of South East Europe in EU education benchmarking, establishment of independent regional forums of experts in some specific fields, facilitation of the emerging regional labor market etc.

The RCC Secretariat established excellent communication with the Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA), discussed with various partners on the modalities of fostering cooperation with ReSPA, in the light of its full operationalization, envisaged for the autumn 2009. The RCC Secretariat contributed to the preparation of a Draft Curriculum for ReSPA, from the aspect of enabling professional training for national civil servants, in accordance with common priorities in the region of South East Europe.

Meeting with the Director of the South East European Entrepreneurial Learning Center (SEE ELC), Ms. Efka Heder held on 28 January 2009, was the opportunity to discuss the establishment of the SEE ECL, located in Zagreb, and venturing channels of communication and cooperation with the RCC and its Secretariat, in respect of adequate positioning of the SEE ELC and strengthening future cooperation among the regional stakeholders in the area of entrepreneurial learning.

On various occasions, The RCC Secretariat met with the representatives of the European Training Foundation (ETF), on which different programs and projects of mutual interest were discussed.

The eventual establishment of the RCC-ETF Memorandum of Understanding was also mentioned whereby a framework of the document needs to be further discussed.

The RCC Secretariat established excellent relations with the Education Department of the OSCE Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Dynamic and lively discussions led to defining three main projects of mutual interest which will be jointly developed: Training of the Education Inspectors, with emphasis on the Bologna Process; Cross-border initiative among parent councils and school leaders. With the Center for Democratic Reconciliation in South East Europe, the Council of Europe and the OSCE Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the modalities of development of the project of Joint History Teaching Materials were discussed. Counterparts emphasized the importance of the project for the improvement of history teaching curriculum as well as for the overall reconciliation process in the region.

Science and Research

The RCC Secretariat has been involved in channeling the project idea on the establishment of a Regional Strategy for Research and Development for the Western Balkans, which has been endorsed by Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia and The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The project was presented at the Multi-Beneficiary IPA Programme Coordination Meeting, which took place in the premises of RCC Secretariat, 9-10 October 2008. The RCC Secretariat has been involved in the coordination of activities towards the development of a Draft Project and further promotion of the project idea. Communication with different stakeholders in the field of research has been strengthened and, in that light, an agreement has been made with the Czech Republic Presidency of the Council of the EU on the co-organization of the Ministerial conference - *Developing the Regional Research Strategy for the Western Balkans*. The Conference was held on 24 April 2009 in Sarajevo and resulted in the adoption of the Joint Statement on developing Regional Strategy for Research and Development for the Western Balkans outlining future steps ahead in this context.

The RCC Secretariat established close contacts with the Steering Platform on Research for the Western Balkans. The representative of the RCC Secretariat participated at the Meeting of the Steering Platform on Research for the Western Balkans, held in Paris on 18-19 December 2008. The Platform was co-chaired by the French Presidency of the EU Council, Serbia on behalf of the Western Balkan Countries, and the European Commission. The discussion on recent developments on Science and Technology for the Western Balkans, gave an overview of the different actions taken during the last six months. It also took note of the growing cooperation within the region and with the EU Member States and the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) Associated States. Western Balkan countries reiterated their interest in the establishment of a Regional Research and Development Strategy and expressed their interest in a better use of IPA funding to support the efforts necessary to design and implement integrated research policies. This synergy was considered as a critical aspect for further participation of the Western Balkans in the Research Framework Programme and their integration into the European Research Area.

At the International Conference for the Central and Eastern Europe, Balkans, Caucasus and Baltic States on Science and education Policies, held in Chisinau, Moldova, from 19-20 September 2008, the RCC Secretariat's representatives exchanged ideas and thoughts with the key decision makers in national science and education policies from Central and South East European countries. The conference focused on strengthening international impact of national research and education programs, strengthening research in higher education, stemming and reversing brain drain and developing a knowledge-based economy.

Culture

The issue of culture was followed closely by the RCC Secretariat. Excellent cooperation was established between the RCC Secretariat and the Council of Europe, which organized a visit of the RCC Secretariat experts to the Council of Europe Secretariat in Strasbourg. With the representatives of three Directorate Generals a number of meetings were held, with particular attention to the activities related to building human capital and cross-cutting issues, such as culture and education. Specific programs were mentioned: Quality Assurance, Life Long Learning Programs, development of Joint History Teaching Materials, Ljubljana Process, Trust Based Societies, Civil Society, Youth etc. Excellent contacts were made and the cooperation will follow especially related to the issues of cultural heritage.

The RCC Secretariat participated at the Culture and Audiovisual Communication – Vector of Peace and European Future in the Countries of South Eastern Europe - conference organized by the Ministry of Culture of The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in Skopje bringing together representatives of respective national institutions and independent experts from South East Europe as well as representatives of international organizations active in this area, representatives of the European Commission (DG Education and Culture) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Office in Venice. Participants presented the main achievements and future plans in regard to strengthening cooperation in the field of culture, with the special emphasis on the project idea of Audiovisual Culture Magazine of 12 participating members from South East Europe. The main goal of the magazine is to bring people from the region closer through the cooperation in the field of culture.

Parliamentary Cooperation

For the parliamentary cooperation as an over-arching theme, the RCC Secretariat took over the agreed set of activities which were decided to be developed over the course of 2008. According to the needs and priorities expressed by the parliaments of South East Europe the events will be organized both for members of parliaments (MPs) and parliamentary staff.

Excellent cooperation has been established with the European Parliament in Brussels as well as with the Regional Secretariat for Parliamentary Cooperation in South East Europe in Sofia in particular in the process of preparation of forthcoming events aimed to tackle the issues of harmonization of legislation with the EU *acquis*, visa issues, parliamentary budget and the law on budget, free trade and adaptation to the internal market.

The 8th meeting of the Cetinje Parliamentary Forum and the Fourth Conference of the European Integration Parliamentary Committees of states participating in the Stabilisation and Association Process (COSAP) held in Cetinje, Montenegro, on 27 March 2009, marked the rejuvenation of these two important regional activities in the parliamentary cooperation area. It is expected that both these forums will encourage the SAA countries to continue with the progress in the process of Euro-integration and carry out the necessary reforms which will strengthen the democratic and institutional capacity in their countries. Importance of regional parliamentary cooperation is the key point in both these activities and in that light, support is articulated to future activities and further institutionalization of the Cetinje Parliamentary Forum.

It has to be noted that the Regional Secretariat on Parliamentary Cooperation in South East Europe does not have enough human capacities and support from the parliaments of the region to deliver envisaged activities and therefore is in a very complex situation. In the previous period, with the assistance of the RCC Secretariat, the Regional Secretariat managed to elaborate a working plan. However, the working plan will be difficult to put into practice in 2009 in view of the limited administrative capacities of the Secretariat.

Cross-cutting issues

Civil society and youth have been placed high on the priority list of the activities of the RCC in the last year. The RCC recognized the importance of involving civil society, and especially young people of the region in all projects and programs the RCC Secretariat is carrying out. They represent a different view, an added value providing broader approach and all-encompassing impact of the undertaken activities. Special efforts are also directed towards building tolerance and reconciliation in the region through trust based society model, as well as enhancement of gender related programs.

IV. Summary

In the first year of its functioning, the RCC focused on the process of transition from the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, setting up of its administrative structures and consolidation of its functioning and activities. This period was marked by strong support of all the partners to the establishment of activities and independent functioning of the RCC. The stakeholders clearly embraced the principle of regional ownership and leadership as the way forward for the region of South East Europe. The process was fostered by a three-fold commitment, that of the region itself, the EU and other substantially interested international partners.

Despite some bilateral differences and outstanding issues, the RCC as a format proved successful for keeping the project-oriented cooperation and dialogue in South East Europe going and bringing together all the interlocutors around the same table. The region should be further encouraged to use the RCC framework as its own instrument of achieving economic and social development, strengthening stability and relaxing a potentially tense atmosphere. The RCC proved its purpose and role in promoting cooperation, dialogue and good-neighborly relations and facilitating European and Euro-Atlantic integration.

The RCC also profiled itself as a key interlocutor of the EU and the broader international community for matters of regional cooperation in South East Europe. It engaged in dialogue and communication with all the partners actively involved in South East Europe, which in turn acknowledged its unique role and function. The RCC framework can be further used by the EU, international organizations and financial institutions as well as donor countries for assisting the region through the difficult period of economic recession in order to fend off the risk of instability and deterioration.

In an effort to mobilize the potentials and resources of the region and to promote the development of sustainable regional cooperation in its own right, the RCC launched the process of networking between the RCC members from South East Europe, the European Commission and IFIs. The RCC possesses expertise and good insight into the priorities and opportunities for cooperation with all the relevant stakeholders and beneficiaries. The networking process resulted in the identification of priority areas on the part of RCC members from South East Europe, project ideas to be submitted for financing under the Multi-beneficiary IPA Programme and project ideas to be submitted to other donors.

The RCC Secretariat applied consistent efforts to bring closer its work and function to all the partners, especially those in RCC members from South East Europe by organizing presentations and outreach activities for government representatives, bodies and institutions, civil society, media, general public and academia. It also established institutional relations and coordination with as well as provided assistance to regional task forces and initiatives regarding access to political, technical and financial support required to fulfill their objectives.

In addition to that, in the past year the RCC initiated or facilitated several important regional projects in its five priority areas that will benefit both governments and ordinary citizens. Below are some of them:

- In cooperation with the World Bank and the UN/ISDR, the RCC Secretariat has facilitated the creation of the **South-Eastern and Central Europe Catastrophe Insurance Facility (SECE-CRIF)**.
- A project outline regarding the establishing of a **South Eastern Europe Fire Fighting Regional Centre (SEEFREC)** was developed in coordination with the Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative for South Eastern Europe (DPPI SEE) and supported by the World Bank.
- A **Climate Change Framework Action Plan for Adaptation** was launched and signed by ministers in charge of environmental issues of the region.
- A **Regional Strategy for Research and Development for the Western Balkans** was launched at a Ministerial Conference organized jointly by the Czech Presidency of the EU and the RCC Secretariat.
- Launch of the **Private Public Partnership as a framework of attracting FDI** which will result in the establishment of a regional PPP expert network and a regional PPP capacity building program.
- **Launch of the OECD Investment Reform Index (IRI) 2009** and new study “Defining and Strengthening Sector Specific Sources of Competitiveness in the Western Balkans” as the first phase of the Regional Competitiveness Project.
- Launch of a **Water Conference** aimed at laying foundations for regional cooperation projects addressing all the aspects of the issue of transboundary waters, including environmental protection, multi-purpose use of transboundary waters and so on.
- Anti-corruption Consultancy and the Integrity and Resistance to Corruption of the Criminal Judicial System in South East Europe.
- The facilitation of the **Bled Stolen Vehicle Process** aimed at improving national and regional legislations and activities in fighting stolen vehicles.
- **Cyber crime Units** project developed with The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as a follow up of the Declaration of the SEECP Ministers of Home Affairs on the Strengthening of Cooperation in Combating Cyber-Crime.
- **Visa Regime Assessment** among SEECP Participating States in cooperation with the SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office of the Republic of Moldova and MARRI.
- Initiative to establish a **Regional Network of (independent) specialized anti-corruption agencies**.
- RCC Secretariat delivered **expert assistance** to governments of the region in developing energy related strategies or institutions.

The results in political and project-oriented terms in the initial year showcase that the RCC as a new and novel mechanism of regional cooperation passed the test. The above mentioned

successes were achieved in the face of a number of challenges. The economic downturn whose impact cannot fully be realized or appraised at the moment is one of the most serious challenges the region is facing. At the same time, fighting recession is largely occupying the EU Member States and risks diverting their attention away from South East Europe. Coupled with the experience and lessons learned of the last enlargement, this development could be an important external factor in the further European integration dynamics of South East Europe.

In order to overcome the challenges of the economic recession and with outstanding bilateral issues affecting regional cooperation, it is in the best interest of South East Europe not to decrease its commitment to regional cooperation or stray away from pre-accession reforms. The presence and efforts of the EU are also essential for keeping stability at its doorstep and assuring that the region does not regress. By completing its institutional reform, the EU will strengthen its potential and effectiveness and stimulate the process of further enlargement.

Most importantly, the region must assume and deepen its share of responsibility. The governments of South East Europe should employ joint and concerted efforts in facing future challenges, speed up reforms in order to progress on the European and Euro-Atlantic path, cooperate on finding solutions to bilateral problems in the spirit of dialogue, compromise and good neighborly relations and engage jointly in large-scale development projects assisted by IFI's funding that would remedy social consequences of the economic recession and give additional incentive to continued reforms.

All the partners in the RCC are invited to keep their commitment to clear strategies for South East Europe through reinforced regional agendas. In order to support this, the region will be best served by maintaining a clear and strong focus on the five priority areas with streamlined efforts and effective and efficient use of resources. A strong role of the SEECF as the political umbrella and voice of the region is essential. In this respect, the RCC will continue to work closely to coordinate activities and priorities with individual SEECF Chairmanships-in-Office.

In closing, the importance of regional cooperation cannot be emphasized enough. With economic difficulties putting additional strain on the governments and their capacity to address and contain them, the structures of regional cooperation, including the RCC, will be additionally put to the test. It is, therefore, crucial to reinforce the commitment to regional cooperation and explore the possibilities for common action for South East Europe for several reasons. Firstly, hardly any of the countries concerned can be deemed self-sufficient when it comes to, let us say, securing optimum energy supply for economic and social development or ensuring adequate transport infrastructure. Secondly, acting together and being capable of formulating a joint response to such complex challenges increases the region's and each individual country's ability to weather the economic, political or social turmoil ahead. It also increases the region's maturity and responsibility in view of hardships and demonstrates its ability to find common ground and cooperate with others, a quality which will be extremely important within the common European and Euro-Atlantic family. Last but not least, regional cooperation promotes

mutual understanding and good neighborly relations as important elements in regional stability.

Appendix

LIST OF TASK FORCES AND INITIATIVES IN SOUTH EAST EUROPE FOR THE PERIOD 2008/2009

RIs and TFs	Role of the RCC Secretariat	Main Goal of Task Force/Initiative	Highest Political Declaration	Key Partners	Stage of Regionalization
Economic and Social Development					
SEE Health Network	Political support.	Coordinate, implement and evaluate the commitments of the Dubrovnik Pledge and its regional projects for developing public health policy and services.	Dubrovnik Pledge 2001 Skopje Pledge 2005	WHO, CoE, bilateral donors to individual health projects.	A MoU has been signed paving the way for the establishment of a secretariat in the region. The Network currently meets on a regular basis with the logistical support of WHO and has benefited from the active participation of all its member countries.
SEE Trade Union Forum	Initiator, mediator, consensus-builder; Political and expert support.	Promote dialogue between trade unions and employer organizations; build consensus between the two; promote inclusion of social partners in government policy making.		ILO, CoE, Switzerland, FES	A regional trade union organization operates under the auspices of the Pan-European Regional Council (PERC) and meets on a regular basis. It receives logistical support from the PERC office in Sarajevo as well as the Croatian Trade Union Association.
SEE Employment Network	Political, technical and logistical support.	Promote an integrated approach to reform of employment policies and labor markets institutions in SEE.	Bucharest Ministerial Conference 2003 Sofia Ministerial Conference 2005 Budva Ministerial Conference 2007	ILO, CoE, Belgium, DG Employment	Following the declining involvement of international partners, there is a pressing need for the Employment Network to assume regional ownership of its future. RCC will thus provide secretarial support to future meetings.

Electronic SEE + Centre for eGovernance Development)	Political and technical support; policy guidance.	Promote the development of Information Society in SEE.	eSEE Agenda 2002 eSEE Agenda Plus 2007 Joint Ministerial Statement, 2004 MoU on Broadband-SEE, 2005 eSEE Agenda Plus, 2007	UNDP, INA Academy, Slovenia, Italy, USA, Microsoft	UNDP funded secretariat is based in Sarajevo and organizes regular meetings of the initiative. The Centre of eGovernance Development has been established in Ljubljana and organizes education events which service the region.
CEFTA 2006	Political promotion, support and intervention as necessary.	Promote regional trade through abolition/reduction of tariffs and elimination of NTBs. Promote an environment conducive to FDI, trade in services, and the protection of intellectual property rights.	CEFTA 2006 Agreement	EC, WTO, EFTA, OECD, Ireland	Secretariat established in Brussels. Operational bodies of CEFTA in place and meeting on a regular basis.
Investment Compact	Political and expert support to OECD which leads the initiative.	Improving SEE investment environment and economic competitiveness through regional cooperation in policy development and promotion. Creation of monitoring system for reform measures.	Ministerial Statement on Regional Framework for Investment in SEE, Vienna 2006	OECD, Investment Compact Project Team, Austria, Serbia	Investment Compact Project Team, SEE Investment Committee and its working groups all operational and meeting on a regular basis.
Business Advisory Council	Political support.	Engaging regional governments and economic policy makers with the needs of the private sector.		Private sector actors.	

Justice and Home Affairs						
Migration, Asylum, Refugee Regional Initiative (MARRI)	Initiator (SP) and provider of political support, Facilitator of project implementation and regional coordination	Promoting regional cooperation issues according to the EU standards	Ministers of Foreign Affairs MoU on MARRI Host Agreement for the MARRI Regional Centre	ACTA, Europol, Frontex, ICMPD, IOM, RCC, SDC, UNHCR, USAID, SEPCA, SECI Center	MARRI Member States, Projects are financed by donors	Fully regionally owned initiative
Regional Anti-corruption Initiative (RAI)	Initiator, provider of political and expert support, Facilitator of project implementation and regional coordination	Promoting governmental anticorruption activities coordination, optimization of efforts and permanent dialogue with the donor community	Ministers of Justice MoU on “cooperation in fighting corruption through the South Eastern European Anti-Corruption Initiative” – 2007 Zagreb Agreement between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the office of the Special Coordinator of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe on “SPAI RSLO* headquarters” - 2003	CoE, UNODC, OSCE, RCC, OECD, USAID, SECI Center	RAI Member States, USAID, donors	Fully regionally owned initiative
Secretariat of the Police Cooperation Convention for Southeast Europe	Political support and regional coordination for the SEE PCC	Coordination, harmonization and cataloguing of all Convention related activities	Police Cooperation Convention for Southeast Europe – 2006 Vienna, signed and ratified by the member states	Member States, EU, DCAF, Austria, Slovenia	DCAF	Austrian-DCAF-Slovenian initiative that works for the benefit of the region
Southeast Europe Police Chiefs Association (SEPCA)	Political support, facilitator of project implementation, initiator of the OCTN (SP) and regional coordination	Regional Cooperation on the strategic level of police directors	SEPCA Statute – 2007 OCTN Letter of Intent - 2005	Member states, EU Commission, RCC, SECI Center, Interpol, OSCE, SDC	Member police services, SDC, donors	Fully regionally owned organization
Southeast European Cooperative Initiative Regional Center for Combating Trans-border Crime (SECI Center)	Political support, facilitator of project implementation and regional coordination	Regional Cooperation on the operational level between police and customs of the region	Agreement on Cooperation to Prevent and Combat Trans-border Crime (SECI Agreement) – 1999 Headquarters Agreement – 2000 Bucharest	Member states, EU Commission, Interpol, OSCE, UNODC, WCO, SEPCA, MARRI, RAI, RCC, SEEPAG	Member states	Fully regionally owned initiative

Southeast European Prosecutors Advisory Group (SEEPAG)	Political and expert support, regional coordination	Mechanism of judicial cooperation with intention to support operation of the SECI Center	Declaration of the SEEPAG - 2003 General Guidelines of the SEEPAG.	Europol, Eurojust, EJM, RCC, SECI Center	SECI Centre	Regionally owned, without permanent secretariat, functioning through SECI Center
Security Cooperation						
Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative for South Eastern Europe (DPPI SEE)	Political, technical and expert support, overall coordination	Create regional capacity to respond to natural and human-made disasters. Bring together donors and IGOs and NGOs to coordinate activities	Declaration on Co-operation in Disaster Preparedness and Prevention in SEE, Bucharest, June 2002, MoU signed by 10 SEE Countries and Slovenia	SEE governments, UNDP, UN, IFRC, NATO, SRSA International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent, Swedish Rescue and Search Agency, Danish Emergency Management Agency, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation	SEE Member states annual contribution Donor countries.	DPPI Secretariat is based in Sarajevo, Regional ownership – member countries.
South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC)	Coordination, assistance for fund-raising, and political support.	Increased control over small arms and light weapons within the countries in South Eastern Europe.	1. Stability Pact /UNDP agreement 2. Ministers of Defense Declaration	UNDP, OSCE, RACVIAC, NATO.	Annual budget cycle. Funding secured until 31 Dec 2009 in the amount of EUR 600	Program and organization is regionally owned. Funding from the region should be secured.
Regional Arms Control Verification Initiative (RACVIAC) – Centre for Security Cooperation	Observer in Multinational Advisory Group (MAG), expert participation in workshops/ seminars	RACVIAC was established as the Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Centre with the aim providing arms control training, promoting confidence and security building measures as well as broaden cooperation in South Eastern Europe (SEE). In line with SEEC Defense Ministerial in 2005 declaration	Conclusions of the RACVIAC Co-ordination Conference Berlin (July 2000). Declaration of SEEC Ministers of Defense, Belgrade, March 2005, and Sofia, February 2008.	SEE MAG participating countries	Contributions to RACVIAC budget by the MAG countries Croatia is providing facilities.	In process of accepting and adopting by SEE Countries a new legal status implementing regional ownership

		it shifted emphasis onto defence conversion.				
Building Human Capital and Cross-Cutting Issues						
Task Force Fostering and Building Human Capital of the RCC	initiator, political support. Facilitation of its work in accordance with the Joint Declaration on the establishment of the RCC and the RCC Statute.	<p>Promote coherency and coordination between education, higher education, research and science by creating a platform for dialogue and cooperation of actors involved in these sectors.</p> <p>Enhancing cooperation for developing knowledge based societies by promoting the knowledge triangle as a key driver in fields such as the Bologna process and follow-ups, Education and training 2010 and follow-ups, the European Research area.</p> <p>For securing sustainable regional cooperation structures, the TF is implementing a Mobility Program aimed at building respective capacities in partner Ministries in SEE.</p>	MoU of Istanbul (2007) between Ministers responsible for education, science and research ("Coordination process"). Joint Statement of Ministers of Education from South Eastern Europe on Building Human Capital and Promoting Diversity through Dialogue, Creativity and Innovation, Oslo, Norway, 5th June 2008.	RCC Board and Secretariat, Istanbul MoU Signatories, Members of the Steering Platform on Research, Members of the ERI SEE	TF Leadership (RO, AT, HR), contributions of members and donors in kind and in cash.	Chairmanship: Romania, Co-Chairmanship: Austria and Croatia.
Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE)	Initiator, political support, has been designed and founded as a follow-up initiative of the Task Force Education and	ERI SEE supports national reforms in education and training through regional capacity building, transfer of know-how and linking these efforts to European	Memorandum of Understanding between SEE ministers of education, science and research signed in Cyprus,	Council of Europe, European Training Foundation, European University Association, Organization for Economic	Austria, the Netherlands, Norway (structural costs exempt from the year 2008), Switzerland,	ERI SEE set up in 2004. Croatia hosts the ERI SEE Secretariat. In 2006 the ERI SEE Secretariat started to function as the ERI SEE Agency

	Youth, SCSP is initiator of Building Human Capital initiative	frameworks for education development (the EU Work Programme 'Education and Training 2010', the Bologna and the Copenhagen Processes). Promoting cooperation between the education and research sectors in South Eastern Europe (SEE) is priority as well.	2003; Memorandum of Understanding between SEE ministers of education, science and research signed in Istanbul, 2007.	Cooperation and Development, Task Force Fostering and Building Human Capital of the Regional Cooperation Council, Task Force Fostering and Building Human Capital of the RCC as of 2008, Austria, The Netherlands, Norway (structural costs exempt from the year 2008), Switzerland. ERI SEE members	Croatia.	located in Zagreb, Croatia.
SEE-ERA.NET and SEE-ERA.NET PLUS	Continue EC support for regionally designed RTD program such as SEE-ERA.NET (PLUS)	Networking projects aimed at integrating EU member states and Southeast European countries in the European Research Area by linking research activities within existing national, bilateral and regional RTD programmes	SEE-ERA.NET White Paper 2007 and Joint Action Plan	1. EU Member States and their responsible Ministries for Science (Austria, Germany, France, Slovenia, Romania Hungary, France) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France 2. National agencies in charge of Science: ZSI, Austria PT-DLR, Germany 3. Western Balkans countries and their Ministries in charge of Science: In SEE-ERA.NET PLUS: Turkey Apart from this all participants from SEE-ERA.NET with the exception of Hungary	SEE-ERA.NET: European Commission (FP 6) and national funding (14 countries) SEE-ERA.NET PLUS: European Commission (FP 7) and national funding	Enhancement of cooperation between participating countries - Implementation of a Pilot Joint Call within SEE-ERA.NET - New call will be implemented in SEE-ERA.NET PLUS (Budget around 3,5 Million Euros) - White Paper - Joint Action Plan
South East European	Political and expert support	Promoting an entrepreneurial	IPA multi beneficiary	Regional members,	EU IPA multi	SEECEL operational

<p>Entrepreneurial Learning Centre (SEECEL)</p>	<p>and cooperation, Non voting member of Steering Committee</p>	<p>culture is an important objective under the renewed Lisbon Agenda and makes an important contribution to create jobs and growth for Europe. Entrepreneurship is one of the 8 key competences defined in the Recommendations on Key Competences for Life-Long Learning adopted by the Commission in 2005. This project shall create the foundations for a more developed entrepreneurship culture across the region and foster the alignment with on-developments in the EU in the field of entrepreneurial learning The overall purpose of this project is to contribute to the implementation of the European Charter for Small Enterprises in the Western Balkans and Small, in particular its components I (entrepreneurship and education) and IV (improved skills for enterprises) which is in line with SBA (2008).</p>	<p>fund consultations and coordination committee; European Charter for Small Enterprises for WB; Letter of support from SEE Countries Governments</p>	<p>European Commission, RCC, OECD.</p>	<p>beneficiary, Croatian Government</p>	<p>from 19 January 2009 in Zagreb</p>
<p>Gender Task Force(GTF)</p>	<p>Political support</p>	<p>Mission: The GTF is committed to advancing sustainable, gender balanced development in SEE, in the context of European</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>Government, Parliament, Civil society, Political parties, Trade unions, Employer associations,</p>	<p>Countries/ Organizations: Norway, Denmark, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, Germany,</p>	<p>Regional Centre in Zagreb; Participating Countries</p>

		integration		Think tanks, Media, International organizations	the Netherlands, Greece	
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