

## **The Bucharest Declaration**

**South East Europe Conference on Employment (SEE-EC)  
Bucharest, 30-31 October 2003**

### **Improving Employment in South Eastern Europe**

The Delegates to the Conference of Bucharest, meeting under the chairmanship of Mrs Elena Dumitru, Minister of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family of Romania, at her invitation and at the invitation of the Council of Europe and of the Belgian Federal Public Service Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue, under the auspices of the Initiative for Social Cohesion of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe,

Bearing in mind the expectations with regard to further cooperation with the EU and within the region,

Recalling the Thessaloniki Declaration adopted on the occasion of the EU-Western Balkans Summit on 21 June 2003,

Considering the important preparatory work leading to this Conference,

**approved unanimously the following declaration :**

We, the Ministers responsible for Employment of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Moldova, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro and "the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", as well as the Head of the Economic Administration of UNMIK<sup>1</sup>, recognise the common problems we face in the area of employment as a result of the restructuring linked to the transition to market economies, insufficient levels of investment as well as the damaging effects of the conflicts in the region in the 1990s.

We acknowledge:

- the substantial reduction in employment and, despite the reforms and restructuring already under way, the consistently high unemployment and relatively slow pace of job creation, the wide skill mismatches and regional disparities, and their adverse consequences for poverty and social cohesion;
- the need to improve employment policies and employment services, including training;
- the need to further develop specific measures and programmes to improve access to employment of vulnerable groups;
- the need to promote labour mobility and to remove obstacles preventing it;
- the need to improve social dialogue.

Together and in partnership with relevant national and international institutions, we are convinced that we can better address these common problems, through improvements of our policies, reinforcement of our institutional capacities, pooling of our expertise in employment matters, and improved co-ordination of available international assistance.

---

<sup>1</sup> Associated to this process according to Security Council Resolution 1244 on Kosovo

We commit ourselves to a process of regional co-operation in the areas of employment, labour markets and training, as described in detail in the Appendix to the present Declaration. The process, intended to better addressing the above-listed problems, is aimed at:

- preparing our future integration into the European Union by converging towards the objectives and guidelines of the European Employment Strategy;
- implementing the Council of Europe standards in employment matters – the European Social Charter and the Revised Social Charter – and creating a situation conducive to the application of Council of Europe Recommendations concerning the promotion of employment; and
- making operational the core elements of the International Labour Office's Global Employment Agenda in our countries.

We are aware that the success of our effort will depend on the creation of a favourable investment climate based on macro-economic stability, full cooperation with social partners, sound legal and regulatory frameworks and governance standards as well as on the development of small and medium enterprises. In this context, we commit ourselves to concentrate our efforts on the following areas:

- promotion of entrepreneurship;
- greater mobility, by:
  - fostering a more flexible labour market but balanced with reasonable employment and income security for workers;
  - examining the possibility of promoting the free movement of workers in the region by means of bilateral agreements;
- incentives for employment creation and training;
- improvement of the performance of the national employment services;
- non-discrimination in access to employment, in remuneration and in working conditions, with particular attention to gender equality;
- handling of the social consequences of privatisations and restructurings;
- improvement of the quality of employment (contracts, remuneration, skills and qualifications, health and safety at work, employment related social protection, etc.);
- specific programmes for vulnerable groups (including access to credit);
- improvement of social dialogue and enhanced involvement of social partners in the formulation and implementation of social and economic policies;
- the transformation of undeclared work into regular work;
- adequate and comprehensive labour market information.

We issue a plea for assistance from international stakeholders to achieve the goals of this Declaration. We acknowledge the important support we have been receiving from international and bilateral institutions. In particular, we acknowledge the important analytical and policy development work of the International Labour Organisation, the Council of Europe and the World Bank.

Under the auspices of the Initiative for Social Cohesion of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, we look particularly to the Council of Europe and the International Labour Organisation for strategic guidance and support in ensuring an efficient follow-up to our meeting along the lines described in the Appendix.

## APPENDIX

### Operation of the process of cooperation on employment in South Eastern Europe

1. The Council of Europe is in charge of coordinating the process of cooperation, in close relation with the International Labour Office, under the auspices of the Social Cohesion Initiative of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe.
2. The Ministers responsible for employment of the beneficiary countries of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe will approve and regularly update the objectives of the cooperation on employment as well as the programme of activities. They will meet every 18 months. The next meeting will take place in the Spring 2005.
3. An assessment process of national employment policies will be launched for each country:
  - 3.1. This assessment process will take into account the key elements of the Global Agenda for Employment of the International Labour Organisation, the European Employment Strategy and the relevant Articles of the European Social Charter and of the Revised Charter and relevant Recommendations of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe;
  - 3.2. In the case of Bulgaria and Romania, the assessment process will rely on the Joint Assessment Papers (JAPs), prepared with the European Commission;
  - 3.3. The national social partners will be fully associated in the process;
  - 3.4. The assessment process will be inspired by the methodology applied between the European Commission and candidate countries in their cooperation on employment within the framework of the EU enlargement;
  - 3.5. Employment experts from Belgium and other EU member states will be invited to contribute with their experience in implementing the European Employment Strategy;
4. A Permanent High-Level Committee (PHLC) composed of the General Directors of Employment of the beneficiary countries of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe will design the programme of activities; set up working groups; mobilise human and financial resources in support of the programme of activities; supervise its implementation and prepare the ministerial meetings.
  - 4.1. The following partners will be able to participate in the meetings of the Permanent High Level Committee, as observers:
    - 4.1.1. the social partners of the countries concerned by the review of national reports;
    - 4.1.2. representatives of international organisations of social partners (IOE, ETUC);
    - 4.1.3. representatives of interested international organisations (UNDP, UNECE, OSCE, OECD,...) and international financial institutions (World Bank, CEB, EBRD, EIB,...);
    - 4.1.4. representatives of interested donor countries.
  - 4.2. The technical contribution of the European Commission will help the process of cooperation.

4.3. The Permanent High-Level Committee will meet at least twice in between ministerial meetings. It will meet in Working Groups with experts to examine, in particular, the following questions:

4.3.1. Review of national employment policies (Working Group I). The Working Group I will meet under the leadership of the ILO;

4.3.2. Capacity-building, quality of service delivery in employment services and improvement of programmes specifically designed for vulnerable groups (Working Group II). The Working Group II will meet under the leadership of the Council of Europe;

4.3.3. Each Working Group will meet at least once in between ministerial meetings.

4.4. The Working Groups will pay particular attention to the identification of projects to be funded by international stakeholders and donors. The collection and coordination of demands and offers for assistance will be monitored by the Initiative for Social Cohesion of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe.

5. The terms of reference and rules of procedure of the Working Groups will be set up at the first meeting of the Permanent High-Level Committee, to take place in Brussels on 9 and 10 December 2003, at the invitation of the Belgian Federal Public Service for Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue.

#### 6. Financing the cooperation process:

The above-mentioned international organisations and international financial institutions are invited to provide long-term assistance to our process of cooperation on employment.

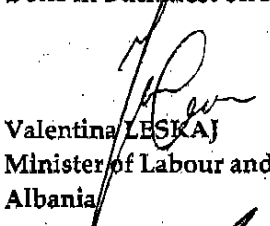
In particular, we ask for support from the stakeholders of the ISC of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe.

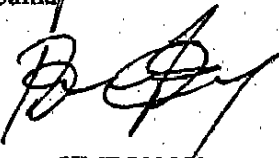
#### 7. Entry into force of the process of cooperation:

The process of cooperation, as described above, will enter into force on 9 and 10 December 2003, at the occasion of the first meeting of the Permanent High-Level Committee.

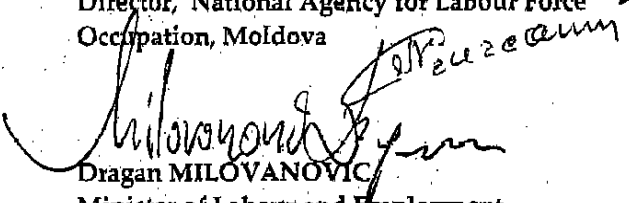
We commit ourselves to meet again in the Spring of 2005 to assess progress achieved over the next 18 months in implementing the goals set out in this declaration.

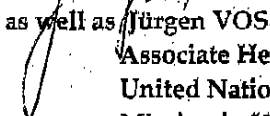
Done in Bucharest on 31 October 2003.

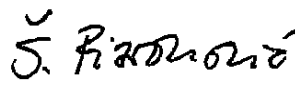
  
Valentina LESKAJ  
Minister of Labour and Social Affairs  
Albania

  
Rumen SIMEONOV  
Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Policy  
Bulgaria

Nina TURCAN  
Director, National Agency for Labour Force  
Occupation, Moldova

  
Dragan MILOVANOVIC  
Minister of Labour and Employment  
Serbia and Montenegro

  
as well as Jürgen VOSS  
Associate Head for Economic Reconstruction  
United Nations Interim Administration  
Mission in Kosovo

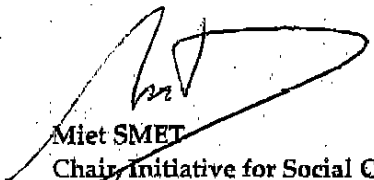
  
Sefic RIZVANOVIĆ  
Minister Adviser  
Ministry of Civil Affairs  
Bosnia and Herzegovina

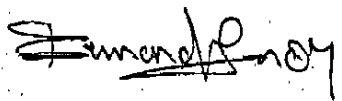
Sanja CRNKOVIC POZAIC  
Director, Employment Service  
Croatia


Elena DUMITRU  
Minister of Labour and Social Solidarity  
Romania

Jovan MANASIJEVSKI  
Minister of Labour and Social Policy  
"The Former Yugoslav Republic of  
Macedonia"

We, the representatives of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, the Council of Europe and the International Labour Organisation, commit ourselves to ensure the follow-up to this Conference.

  
Miet SMET  
Chair, Initiative for Social Cohesion  
Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe

  
Bernard SNOY  
Director, Working Table II  
Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe

  
Gabriella BATTAINI-DRAGONI  
Director General of Social Cohesion  
Council of Europe

  
Göran HULTIN  
Executive Director - Employment Sector  
International Labour Organisation