



Regional Cooperation Council

Strategy and Work Programme 2011 – 2013

Sarajevo, 17 June 2010



Regional Cooperation Council

Publisher: Regional Cooperation Council Secretariat
Sarajevo, 17 June 2010

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1. Introduction

The Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) has completed two years of operation. During this period the transition from the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe was achieved successfully: the RCC's structures and Secretariat were set up and became fully operational; the new, regionally owned, organisation has deployed a multifold activity, representing the region, supporting and initiating regional cooperation. The challenge is now to increase its efficiency by focusing on result-oriented activities identifying areas where it can provide added value and assuming a more strategic role in promoting regional cooperation in South East Europe.

The RCC operates under the political guidance of the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP). Its objectives, working methods and priority areas for action are defined by its Statute and other documents adopted at the RCC Annual Meetings and endorsed by the SEECP Summits. Being the main focal point for regional cooperation, the RCC has a key role in supporting economic and social development and promoting the region's European and Euro-Atlantic integration, of which regional cooperation is an essential part. Linking the region with the donor community in areas with a regional dimension is another important aspect of its work.

The present document is the result of a process that started in spring 2009 and aims at providing a new impetus to the RCC's work in the coming three-year period by making use of its potential and focusing on the lines described above. This process involved an intense dialogue both within the RCC and between it and donor community.

The document consists of a general part, ("Strategy"), and the "Work Programme 2011-2013". The Strategy defines the permanent "horizontal" activities of the RCC. The Work Programme covers each of the agreed priority areas. It briefly analyses the importance and value added of their regional dimension. Based on the state-of-play of existing activities, including, where possible a mention of gaps and overlaps, the regional priorities for the period 2011-13 are identified. Within these, the RCC will focus on a limited number of targeted actions.

Two Annexes are attached: Annex I provides more details on planned actions in line with the Work Programme, including potential partners and timelines. Annex II is an overview of the existing regional initiatives and task forces by priority sector.

2. Strategy

The RCC will continue to exercise a number of general (“horizontal”) functions in line with its mandate, where possible improving its practice during the first two years of its operation. In so doing, it will be guided by the principles of all-inclusiveness and regional ownership, in line with the Statute of the RCC.

- **Representing the region:** The RCC and its Secretary General will continue to represent the region, under the political guidance of SEECP, in international initiatives, fora and multilateral and bilateral meetings, thus promoting the region’s socio-economic development and European and Euro-Atlantic integration.
- **Assisting the SEECP:** The RCC will further develop its relationship with the SEECP, using the mechanisms provided by the SEECP Charter and the RCC Statute. The RCC Secretariat will support the SEECP in fulfilling its tasks by working towards the preparation and implementation of decisions of SEECP Summits and/or Ministerial meetings. Annual planning meetings to coordinate activities shall be held between the RCC Secretariat and the SEECP Troika, with the participation of the EU, prior to the takeover by incoming SEECP Chairmanships in Office (CiOs). Implementation will be

monitored through regular quarterly consultations. The RCC will provide secretarial and expert assistance to the SEECP CiO.

- **Monitoring regional activities:** The RCC, through its Secretariat, will play a key role in monitoring and reporting on the multitude of regional activities in South East Europe. To that end, it will seek to be well-informed on ongoing and planned regional activities by participating, as appropriate, in meetings and events, maintaining contacts, exchanging information and, where relevant, setting up working arrangements with regional initiatives and organisations, including international ones which are active in the region. The RCC Secretary General’s Annual Report on Regional Cooperation in South East Europe will cover all relevant regional activities, in addition to those of the RCC.
- **Exerting strategic leadership in regional cooperation:** The RCC is well placed to exert much needed leadership in promoting regional cooperation in South East Europe, in close cooperation with other stakeholders. The RCC’s added value lies in its expertise and in providing a regional perspective, not least in the context of the EU integration process. In the coming period, it will

place more emphasis on this role by assessing existing cooperation activities, promoting the principle of inclusiveness, identifying needs and complementarities, facilitating new activities and improving the existing ones. The RCC will also help regional initiatives to fill the gaps and/or reduce redundancies and overlaps. The RCC will, in close cooperation with the SEECP and other relevant stakeholders, continue the process of streamlining of regional taskforces and initiatives with the aim of achieving enhanced effectiveness, synergy and coherence. It will seek to find solutions to possible issues arising in regional cooperation from the different status of participating states with respect to the EU. The RCC will focus on a number of selected actions, also taking into account resource constraints.

- **Providing a regional perspective in donor assistance, notably in EU assistance under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA):** The RCC will continue to contribute to the programming of IPA Multi-beneficiary Programme (IPA MB) through participation of its experts in the IPA MB working groups. The aim is to ensure that IPA priorities correspond to regional priorities, and to focus attention on the need for beneficiaries to cooperate amongst themselves and liaise with other key stakeholders and the donor community. The RCC is ready to play a similar role, as appropriate, regarding assistance to the region from other donors. The RCC Secretariat is also part of the donor coordination process through its participation in the International Financial Institutions Advisory Group (IFIAG) and the Steering Committee of the Western Balkan Investment Framework (WBIF).

- **Supporting increased involvement of civil society in regional activities.**

In its above functions, the RCC will concentrate on the role of catalyst and “incubator” of activities, leaving project implementation to the appropriate actors. When contributing to setting up of new initiatives and networks, it will aim to ensure their eventual administrative and financial self-sustainability. This does not exclude, in a limited number of cases, a transitory role of the Secretariat in managing and supporting new initiatives.

The present Strategy and Work Programme will be implemented using the existing human resources and budgetary framework of the RCC. The latter will be supplemented by planned additional financial contribution by the EU for two initiatives that will be taken over by the RCC in 2011 (South East European Investment Committee and Ljubljana Process). Actions developed in partnership with other actors (SEE governments, regional initiatives, international organisations, etc.) will also benefit from contributions from these.

The adoption of the general framework for the RCC Secretariat’s budget for the coming period will require agreement on future distribution of contributions among the RCC Board Members. It may also require appropriate measures and adjustments of working structures of the RCC Secretariat and its bodies.

The Secretary General will present the status of the implementation of this Strategy and Work Programme in his regular reports.

3. Work programme 2011-2013

The aim of this part of the document is to identify, for each of the priority areas (sectors) of the RCC work, a limited number of key activities - within the agreed regional priorities - on which the RCC will concentrate its efforts during the period 2011-2013. To achieve this, an analysis of the importance of each sector and its regional dimension is presented, as well as a brief description of the existing regional activities. The role and added value of the RCC is subsequently identified, leading to setting out specific actions on which it will focus in the coming period. Tasks which form part of the RCC general functions such as monitoring regional activities, participating in events, developing relations with other regional initiatives or participating in donor programming processes (including IPA MB) are not mentioned here as they have been described in the general part listed above. The RCC will focus on the activities identified in this section. This does not exclude the engagement on some other activities in each sector. Indications of such additional activities can be found in Annex I.

I. Economic and Social Development

Importance of sector - regional dimension - existing activities

In recent years, efforts for economic and social development in South East Europe have been dominated by reform agendas supporting strong economic growth and EU integration. In spite of progress made, however, the economies remain frail and the social fabric weak. The economic downturn triggered by the global financial crisis has had a profound negative impact on South East European economies, magnifying structural deficiencies and revealing a strong need for accelerated structural reform. Adding to the current negative developments is the gradual phasing out of bilateral donor assistance and the region's modest capacity to absorb EU funds. The growth forecast for 2011-2013 for South East Europe remains very conservative and it will be unrealistic to expect a return to pre-crisis growth rates in the short term.

Both the public and private sector's external financing needs are immense, but fragile balance sheets constrain available growth strategies. The private sector,

and especially the small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) segment, is struggling to access capital, tap into new markets, and create higher value added products and services. The informal economy and employment are substantial. High unemployment persists throughout the region, additionally straining the already fragile social cohesion. The technological base of companies is low and their capacity to innovate and attract financing for technology start-ups or expansion projects is extremely limited. The lack of adequate research and technology development in South East Europe has also shaped the structure of the industry and its outputs with regional exports being dominated by commodities.

While the bulk of economic and social development interventions remain in the national domain, there are several areas where strengthened regional cooperation already yields or can yield substantial results and add value to national-level efforts. The small size and fragmentation of the economies of the region provides strong justification for regional trade and economic integration, in parallel with the growing integration with the EU and the global economy. Regional free trade and its deepening as well as joint efforts to attract foreign investment are domains where the value added of regional cooperation is evident. Historical and present affinities between the economies of the region often justify a regional approach in disseminating policy analysis, spreading best practices and exchanging national experiences, in close collaboration with the EU and other international actors.

There is an important number of regional organisations, initiatives and networks in this priority area. CEFTA 2006 is one

of the most important achievements of cooperation in the region. It has established a free trade area and is working to deepen it, but is presently faced with challenges related to the participation of all parties to the agreement. The OECD-managed SEE Investment Committee (SEEIC) is the main regional forum for deliberating reform and disseminating policy analysis and advice. The Electronic South East Europe Initiative (eSEE) aims at supporting the development of the Information Society in the region. Other initiatives and networks cover areas such as chambers of commerce, investment promotion agencies, public private partnerships, women entrepreneurs, employment and social policy, trade unions and public health.

Regional priorities for 2011-2013 - Role of the RCC

For the coming period 2011-2013, the RCC assesses the following regional priorities in the area of economic and social development:

- **Consolidating and further developing CEFTA 2006 and overcoming present challenges** due to protectionist trends and obstacles in ensuring its inclusiveness. These tasks should be principally carried out by CEFTA's own structures. Possible RCC assistance in specific areas will be explored with CEFTA's secretariat.
- **Transferring the South East European Investment Committee (SEEIC) to regional ownership and developing its activity.** The SEEIC should play a key role in creating a single investment space in the region which would provide for much needed economies of scale, while preparing regional economies for the

prospect of an EU investment market. The RCC will play a central role in this process by taking over from the OECD the management of the SEEIC and the operations of its working groups.

- **Exploring and developing ways to improve access to finance.** Insufficient access to favourable finance remains a key impediment to private sector growth in the South East Europe. Early-stage and risk-capital finance is almost nonexistent. Regional capital markets are currently fragmented through nine stock exchanges in the Western Balkans. More intensive cooperation of South East European capital markets and possible establishment of new regional financing vehicles (ideas for the creation of a South East European Investment Bank, a Western Balkans Technology Fund and a Credit Line for Women Entrepreneurs) should be explored. The RCC will contribute to this work.
- **Ensuring that economic reforms and social agendas go hand-in-hand.** The full impact of the global economic downturn has reinforced the need for further integrating social agendas into the economic reform deliberations. In line with the renewed EU social agenda, promoting job creation for inclusive economic growth, decent working conditions, and equal opportunities are major priorities for the region. In line with the EU 2020 strategy, a major aim for the region would be to modernise labour markets while enabling people to develop their skills throughout the lifecycle with a view to increase labour participation and better match labour supply and demand. The RCC will play an important role in promoting these objectives at the regional level.

- **Pursuing the establishment of the Information Society** by promoting implementation of the Electronic South East Europe Initiative (eSEE) Agenda Plus as defined by the Ministerial Conference in Sarajevo in October 2007.

RCC work programme

On the basis of the above, the RCC will focus its efforts on the following actions in the period 2011-2013:

1. **Transfer and management of the SEEIC:** The RCC will implement the transfer of the SEEIC from the OECD to the region, as agreed. The transfer will take place during the next year and a half and will be supported by the OECD and EC. The RCC will complete the handover and ensure the SEEIC is fully operational. Inputs to the regional investment policy debate from other regional structures will be streamlined into the SEEIC agenda. For the coming three-year period, the RCC will have an operational role in managing and coordinating day-to-day activities of the SEEIC.
2. **Identifying ways and means for improving access to finance for private sector:** The RCC will explore the opportunity and feasibility of establishing a regionally-owned development finance vehicle; it will identify and address gaps for further capital markets integration, and will promote diversification of private sector financing instruments through considering the establishment of business angel networks and/or other regional early-stage financing mechanisms. To that end, the RCC will mobilise relevant expertise in close cooperation with appropriate regional and international actors, providing a platform for collaboration between

stakeholders and assisting the efforts to raise funds for technical assistance.

3. **Mainstreaming employment and social agenda into economic reform deliberations:** In close cooperation with other international stakeholders, the RCC intends to help revive the activities of *Employment and Social Policy Network*. The RCC will support the establishment of a permanent secretariat and facilitate the development of possible regional projects to contribute to sustainability of regional cooperation on employment policy, while ensuring concrete steps are taken towards improving employment outcomes. The RCC will also further develop synergies with the *Regional Programme on Social Security Coordination and Social Security Reforms in South-East Europe* currently being implemented by the European Commission and the Council of Europe. The RCC will also support the establishment of a regional consultative assembly composed of social partners and civil society and conducting analysis and recommendations in the interest of regional development.
4. **Promoting the Information Society:** The RCC will work with the eSEE Secretariat, hosted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the eSEE Working Group consisting of representatives of Ministries, to update the eSEE Agenda Plus and better reflect current realities. The aim will be to refocus it on a smaller set of more realistic objectives that could have a deeper impact on the region. A network of regional ICT research institutions will be established and developed and will be linked closer to the private sector. To that end, the RCC will use the expertise of the Centre for eGovernance Development.

II. Infrastructure and energy

Importance of sector - regional dimension - existing activities

Countries of the region need secure and affordable energy supply as well as developed energy, transport and environmental infrastructures and support services. These are key for their economic development, quality of life and EU integration. Energy and transport networks fully integrated into the respective European ones also serve vital EU interests.

Interconnectivity and interoperability of regional transport systems are necessary in order to ensure sustainable and competitive mobility in South East Europe with a view to achieve smooth functioning of international transport and trade. All these needs are increasingly challenged by the economic and financial crisis and its social impact, as well as by climate change and other environmental pressures.

The cross-border nature of energy supply security, energy and transport networks and environmental challenges highlights the crucial importance of regional cooperation. More than in other areas, regional cooperation here is an integral part of the EU integration process. At the same time, infrastructure reform and development present a major challenge to South East Europe, considering their limited resources and administrative capacities.

Major recently established regional cooperation structures cover markets, policies and infrastructures in this area and promote regional and EU integration as well as legal, institutional

and regulatory reform, creating a solid basis for harmonization with the EU requirements. These include the *Southeast Europe Energy Community*, the *European Common Aviation Area*, the *South East Europe Transport Observatory (SEETO)* and the *Regional Environmental Network for Accession (RENA)*. A *Transport Community Treaty* is currently under negotiation. There is a number of cooperation schemes in the area of the Danube River and its tributaries, while the EU recently launched an initiative for an integrated *Danube Region Strategy*.

Substantial financing for infrastructure development is granted to the region by the IFIs, the EU and other donors. The establishment of the *Western Balkan Investment Framework (WBIF)* last year aims at strengthening financing mechanisms and improving coordination among the donor community.

Regional priorities for 2011-2013 - Role of the RCC

Overall, regional priorities for the coming period in the field of energy, transport and environment have been set and are being implemented by the existing structures and initiatives. These priorities are closely linked to the pre-accession strategies of RCC members from the region.

- **The Energy Community Treaty (ECT)** will continue its work towards gradual development of a regional electricity and gas market and will focus on activities aimed at facilitating investment in the region. At the same time, the ECT will work on energy efficiency and socio-economic impacts of energy sector reforms in South East Europe. The ECT will also promote

cooperation in the oil sector. Possible further RCC cooperation with the ECT will be explored.

- **In the area of transport**, the present priority is the signing and entry into force of the Treaty establishing the Transport Community, as well as the entry into force and implementation of the **ECAA Agreement**. Possible fields for an RCC contribution in this area include air services and road safety.
- **In the area of environment**, the priority is to set up the Regional Environmental Network for Accession (RENA). Through its envisaged broad scope of action, it will cover most areas of concern for the countries of the region. The RCC will explore its relations with RENA, once the latter becomes operational.
- **Better coordination of donor assistance for development of regional infrastructure** is expected through the operation of the newly-established WBIF. As an observer in the WBIF Steering Committee the RCC will share experience, provide relevant input and policy advice.
- **Concerning the Danube area**, the priority is the elaboration of the Danube Region Strategy by the Commission, with the participation of relevant stakeholders, in order for the Commission's Communication and Action Plan to be presented in December 2010. The RCC will focus on promoting the "bottom-up" approach cooperating with the relevant stakeholders.

The RCC assesses that ongoing and planned activities, through existing regional structures, by and large adequately cover

the needs and priorities in this area. It sees its own role as complementary in bringing an integrated “holistic” regional perspective into various sectoral initiatives and filling specific gaps in close coordination with the existing structures. In particular, it intends to promote the Public Private Partnership (PPP) model for infrastructure development as well as “green” economy as a tool for structural changes.

RCC work programme

The RCC will focus its efforts on the following actions in the period 2011-2013, in addition to its general role of monitoring and reporting on developments in this area:

1. **Continue implementation of Sustainable Energy Development Regional Initiative (SEDRI)** jointly launched with the Central European Initiative (CEI). The initiative aims at encouraging construction of small-scale sustainable energy facilities amongst interested members from South East Europe and improving legislative, institutional and regulatory frameworks that would be conducive to development of sustainable regional energy sector. The RCC will offer administrative support in further development of the initiative and its implementation.
2. **Explore potential for cooperation with the Energy Community Secretariat:** In the area of energy, the ECT is of an all-encompassing nature and is assisted by a well-established Secretariat. The RCC will explore, together with the ECT Secretariat, whether assistance or political support is needed. The RCC will participate in the relevant

meetings, bringing the perspective of the wider region and mobilising actors at a regional or local level, where necessary.

3. **Contribute to the preparation and implementation of the Danube Region Strategy:** The RCC will participate in the relevant Danube Region Strategy meetings, bringing the perspective of the wider region. It will also focus on ensuring participation of local authorities associations, civil society and media in the process.
4. **Explore the potential for further development of air services within the region:** To that end, the RCC will primarily contribute to mobilise expertise and will liaise with relevant authorities within the region as well as the European Commission in order to prepare a feasibility study on this matter.
5. **Contribute to the promotion of road safety** by supporting implementation of relevant EU directives and in particular, implementation of the relevant UN General Assembly Resolution in SEE. In this respect, RCC will promote a multisectoral approach alongside the inclusion of different level stakeholders.

III. Justice and home affairs

Importance of sector - regional dimension - existing activities

Despite considerable progress, South East Europe faces major challenges in the area of rule of law, which is fundamental for democratic societies and functioning of market economies. Nascent structures of countries emerging from post-conflict situations and undergoing major socio-economic reforms are particularly vulnerable to organised crime and corruption. Addressing these negative phenomena is a crucial condition for accession to the EU and has been assessed as a high priority to be tackled early in the pre-accession process.

There is a strong international and regional dimension in combating organised crime. Borders are no obstacle to organised criminal groups. Hence, it is important that the SEE countries cooperate among themselves in tackling these challenges. In the fight against corruption, exchange of experience and information, as well as dissemination of best practices at the regional level is a useful complement to similar exercises at European and international level.

The need for regional cooperation is most evident in criminal issues, but is also manifest in a range of practical challenges that people face in their daily lives in the area of private and civil law, such as labour and family law, inheritance and property rights and mutual recognition of civil court decisions.

A range of regional activities and structures have been developed in the past years with varying success and impact. These include

the *Southeast European Cooperative Initiative Regional Center for Combating Trans-border Crime-SECICenter/Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre - SELEC*, the *Police Cooperation Convention for South East Europe - PCC*, the *Southeast Europe Police Chiefs Association - SEPCA*, the *Southeast European Prosecutors' Advisory Group - SEEPAG*, the *Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative - RAI*, and the *Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative - MARRI*. Furthermore, donors have launched a number of actions aimed at strengthening the regional dimension of the rule of law. These include in particular the *Prosecutors' Network of the Western Balkans*, creating direct linkages among the prosecutorial services, and the setting up of the *International Law Enforcement Coordination Units - ILECU*s, strengthening national platforms for international police and law enforcement cooperation.

Overall, regional police cooperation is relatively advanced, while prosecutors' and judges' cooperation is less so. In the areas of the fight against corruption as well as management of migration, there are only limited results of the mentioned initiatives. Cooperation in the areas of the protection of fundamental rights and of private and civil law is the least developed. National and regional activities are often fragmented and uncoordinated.

Regional priorities for 2011-2013 - Role of the RCC

- **The core regional priority in the field of justice and home affairs is to fight organised crime**, focusing particularly on economic and financial crime, smuggling of drugs and trafficking in human beings. Attention should also be given to the regional dimension

of the fight against terrorism as well as the suppression of the financing of terrorism. Existing initiatives, such as SECI/SELEC, PCC and SEPCA, have a key role to play in tackling these issues. Bearing in mind that there are no regional structures on judiciary cooperation, improvement can be achieved through the exchange of liaison magistrates and the creation of a regional judicial network. The RCC will have a supportive role in particular in facilitating the process of strengthening and streamlining judicial and prosecutorial cooperation, enhancing links between police, prosecution and judiciary.

- **In the area of the fight against corruption**, the regional priority is to improve sharing of good practices within the scope of the existing initiatives. Corruption must be addressed simultaneously, from both perspectives, the regional and the national. In this context, RAI activities need to be better targeted. The RCC will support RAI to this effect.
- As regards **migration**, MARRI should build its capacity to assist its member states in assessing circumstances in countries and regions of origin for potential asylum seekers and refugees and address cooperation on migration (both legal and illegal) within the region. Cooperation in fighting illegal migration should be further strengthened. The proper implementation of readmission agreements should also be promoted.
- **Protection of fundamental rights as well as cooperation in private and civil law matters**, has to be developed, taking into account the

growing freedom of movement of people, goods and services in the SEE. An efficient fight against organised crime and terrorism needs to take into account fundamental rights, notably rights pertaining to liberty and security, access to justice, right to a fair trial and to a due process, free legal aid, alternative dispute resolutions, assistance and redress mechanisms for crime victims.

RCC work programme

Based on the above analysis and priorities, the RCC will focus on the following actions for the period 2011-2013:

1. **Coordinate drafting and adoption of a Regional Strategy and Action Plan on Justice and Home Affairs 2011-2014, and monitoring of its implementation.** This will include an analysis of possible overlaps of different regional initiatives and projects and suggestions for rationalising and streamlining them. To that end the RCC Secretariat will use the links it has established with national authorities, regional structures and networks, as well as with international organisations in the JHA area.
2. **Strengthen judicial and prosecutorial cooperation in criminal matters.** The RCC will establish a working group to study the prerequisites for closer cooperation among police, prosecution and judiciary. In this context, it will explore the options for improving cooperation between the Western Balkans Prosecutors' Network and SEEPAG.
3. **Support existing initiatives in the area of the fight against corruption.** RCC experts will support RAI in

focusing its activities on sharing good practices and addressing corruption at local and regional level, as well as in implementing GRECO recommendations.

4. **Support MARRI in strengthening its capacity** to address different migration-related issues, and in information-gathering and sharing, regarding potential countries of origin for asylum-seekers and refugees. The RCC will also provide expert and administrative support to MARRI, notably in organising meetings on issues pertaining to migration.
5. **Initiate regional cooperation in private and civil law matters and in protection of fundamental rights.** The RCC will engage the region in exchange of best practices and lessons learnt on cooperation in private and civil law matters and in the protection of fundamental rights, within the agreed RCC priority areas. To that end, it will closely cooperate with relevant European and international institutions (European Commission, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime - UNODC, Council of Europe, INTERPOL, EUROPOL etc).

IV. Security Cooperation

Importance of sector - regional dimension - existing activities

Overall security and political stability have greatly improved in South East Europe in the past decade. Six countries are members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and five participate in the Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme. Three RCC members from South East Europe are members of the EU, which plays its own role through its security structures and European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) activities. However, there is a need to build administrative capacity - taking into account the limited resources - in order to deal with multilateral cooperation in this area, continue Security Sector Reform, defence conversion and disaster risk reduction, as well as to continue reforms in order to meet the criteria, where applicable, for European and Euro-Atlantic integration.

Concerning disaster risk reduction, the fact that South East Europe is highly vulnerable to natural, and, in some cases, manmade disasters with cross-border impact enhances the rationale for strengthening cooperation in order to prevent disasters and/or deal with the effects. As capabilities of RCC members from South East Europe vary with regard to their capacity in terms of preparedness and prevention, it makes sense to cooperate in reducing the risk and effects of natural disasters. Cooperation in this field is also part of the European integration process. RCC members from South East Europe are also exposed financially to the high risk of natural disasters.

In the area of security and defence cooperation, several regional initiatives and task forces operate in SE Europe, primarily the *South East European Defence Ministerial - SEDM* and the *Southeast Europe Clearinghouse - SEEC*, the *Centre for Security Cooperation - RACVIAC*, and the *South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons - SEESAC*. In disaster risk reduction, the main regional organisation is the *Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative for South Eastern Europe - DPPI SEE*.

Regional priorities for 2011-2013 - Role of the RCC

For the period 2011-2013, the RCC has identified the following priorities for the region:

- **Enhance regional dialogue and cooperation mechanisms on security and defence issues**, including development of common strategies, planning and coordination processes. The RCC will facilitate and support the development of regional dialogue and cooperation mechanisms with high impact on confidence building.
- **Develop a regional approach to disaster risk reduction**, through participation in the European Commission Disaster Risk Reduction and Civil Protection programmes, developing networks to fight forest fires (e.g. the South East European Fire-fighting Regional Centres Network - SEEFREC), reducing fiscal liability to natural disasters and enhancing regional cooperation in dealing with hazardous materials. The European Commission will begin implementing a programme on Civil Protection Cooperation with candidate

countries and potential candidates aiming at bringing them closer to the EU Civil Protection Mechanism with the prospect of full participation in the Mechanism, once the conditions are met. The RCC will contribute to this goal through assisting and facilitating regional structures and mechanisms for disaster risk reduction.

RCC work programme

On the basis of the above, the RCC will focus its efforts on the following actions in the period 2011-2013:

1. **Facilitate and support development of regional mechanisms** with low-cost activities and high impact on confidence building, such as the *South East European Defence Policy Directors Forum*, the *Forum of South East European National Authorities on Information Security*, the *South East European Defence Intelligence Forum* and the *South East European Counter-Intelligence Chiefs Forum*.

The RCC will also work to ensure inclusion of Civil Society Organisations in this process.

2. **Continue its work towards establishment of regional structures for disaster risk reduction**, including the *SEEFREC*, in cooperation with international partners.
3. **Assist in the implementation of the World Bank project to develop the ability of governments of the region to reduce the fiscal liability for natural disasters through the establishment of the *Southeast and Central European Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility (SECE-CRIF)*.**

V. Building Human Capital

Importance of the sector - regional dimension - existing activities

Building human capital through development of education, science, culture and research is fundamental, not least for strengthening administrative capacities and increasing long-term competitiveness. It is also crucial for successful European integration, taking into account the objectives of Lisbon Strategy and Europe 2020. While human capital development is a national priority throughout South East Europe, current investment levels in the region in this field are far below what is needed.

Development of human capital is basically pursued at the national level, but the rapid internationalisation of knowledge and development of communications introduce a strong international component in the process. The common background and similarities between many of the educational systems in the region provide an additional justification for regional cooperation. Regional projects foster knowledge transfer, exchange of best practices, and can lower project realisation costs. Regional university cooperation and development of a comparable system for evaluation of education are good examples. Such cooperation can lead to improved transparency of qualifications and allow greater mobility of workers, students and academics within the region.

There is an obvious need to modernise education systems in the region, with an emphasis on further involvement of democratisation and reconciliation elements in teaching methodologies. Areas

that are insufficiently developed and need to be approached in a coherent manner include life-long learning, evidence-based policy making, societal debate on education policy, stakeholder participation in decision-making, education institutions' autonomy as well as professional administration.

South East Europe has a rich and diverse cultural heritage which often crosses existing borders. It is essential that this cultural heritage be safeguarded. In this context, identification and restoration of cultural sites, including those damaged during conflicts, is essential and has an important political dimension by contributing to reconciliation. Development of relevant competences and promotion of intercultural dialogue will contribute to respect for and promotion of cultural diversity and good neighbourly relations. It will also allow the region to make its voice heard in a broader European context in this domain.

Developing supportive networks among civil society and youth organisations and their inclusion in BHC projects is of great importance for reaching set objectives.

A number of regional initiatives and networks have been operating in recent years in the areas of education, science and research and culture. Most of these have been developed in close cooperation and with assistance from the EU and other international donors. The *Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE)* is a regional platform aiming to support national reforms in education and training. Two task forces have been operating under the umbrella of the RCC: The *Task Force Fostering and Building Human Capital (TF FBHC)* and the *Gender Task Force*. The EU-funded *Regional School*

of *Public Administration (ReSPA)* aims to improve the level of public administration in the Western Balkans, in line with the principles of the European Administrative Space.

National research authorities have been developing national strategies and integrating them into the European Research Area. A *Steering Platform on Research* brings together all stakeholders who are committed to increasing the research capacity in Western Balkans. Moreover, since April 2009, all Western Balkan countries are running, together with EU member states, a comprehensive regional joint research funding programme (SEE-ERA.NET PLUS), co-financed by the EC.

The *Council of Ministers of Culture of South-East Europe (CoMoCoSEE)*, contributes to regional cultural co-operation. Through the EC-Council of Europe "*Ljubljana Process*", a series of concrete actions were undertaken for the rehabilitation of selected cultural and archaeological sites in the Western Balkans.

Regional priorities 2011 -2013 - Role of the RCC

Developing comprehensive regional strategies is the main challenge at the regional level for the coming period in all three areas of education, science and research and culture. Strengthening of the existing networks and connecting regional cooperation mechanisms is another objective.

For the coming period 2011-2013, the RCC assesses the following regional priorities in the area of human capital development:

- **Establishing ReSPA as a fully operational regional school**, by completing the process of ratification of the international agreement on which it is based and fully developing its activities.
- **Promoting education reform, with emphasis on higher education**, including through further strengthening of the Education Reform Initiative for South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE) and through integration with the European Higher Education Area, establishment of a common qualification evaluation framework and upgrading management capacities of the sector. Improving transparency of qualifications will allow for increased mobility of students and academics within the region. The RCC shall provide support to the promotion and development of education reform processes, in cooperation with existing regional initiatives, in particular with TF FBHC.
- **Developing a Regional Strategy for Research and Development for Innovation for the Western Balkans.** The first aim of the Strategy will be to interconnect national research and innovation systems, thus promoting competitiveness of the region. The RCC shall facilitate and support the development of the Regional Strategy in close cooperation with regional and international partners.
- **Transferring the coordination of the Ljubljana Process to the region.** The RCC will take the role of coordinator in the new phase of Ljubljana Process after 2010 (Ljubljana Process II).

The RCC has an important role to play in steering such efforts, in close cooperation with the relevant EU and international structures, including the European Commission, the European Training Foundation and the Council of Europe.

RCC work programme

On the basis of the above, the RCC will focus its efforts on the following actions in the period 2011-2013:

1. **Taking over coordination of Ljubljana Process:** In line with a decision by the Western Balkans culture ministers, the RCC will take the role of coordinator in the new phase of Ljubljana Process after 2010 (Ljubljana Process II). The process will be supported by a European Commission project in preparation. A Task Force on Culture and Society will be established by the RCC, and a permanent secretariat will be appointed by the RCC in cooperation with the Council of Europe and the European Commission, in order to undertake the Ljubljana Process management and fund-raising activities and to be a counterpart of the national task forces which will be created in each country of the region.
2. **Support to education reform, with emphasis on higher education:** The RCC will facilitate the development of possible regional projects and will engage in promoting identified regional priorities, in cooperation with the TF FBHC. The RCC will chair a Steering group, within the Novi Sad Initiative, for guiding and monitoring progress of higher education structural reform which will be established under the umbrella of RCC. These activities

will be realised in coordination with other regional and European initiatives. The RCC will support the further development of ERI SEE. Special emphasis will be placed on ensuring synergy and avoiding overlap with currently ongoing EU education programmes, including Tempus and Erasmus Mundus.

3. **Development of a Regional Strategy for Research and Development for Innovation for the Western Balkans:** The RCC will facilitate experts from the region in contributing to a project, co-financed by the European Commission, that will develop a comprehensive regional research strategy with emphasis on identifying existing research capacities and considering how networking and interconnections can be established and/or improved among Western Balkans institutes and researchers. It will channel their work towards establishment of benchmarks for research and innovation systems and cooperation at the regional level, as well as explore possibilities to finance such regional initiatives, including from the business sector.

VI. Parliamentary Cooperation

Importance of sector – regional dimension – existing regional activities

Functioning and efficient democratic institutions are a prerequisite for political stability, economic development, social cohesion and overall trust in democracy. In South East Europe, parliaments, as legislators, play a central role in promoting and implementing reforms, notably within the framework of countries' European agenda, as well as in increasing the efficiency and transparency of governing structures.

Parliamentary cooperation contributes to reconciliation and good neighbourly relations. It is also useful in the context of common efforts for harmonisation and alignment of legislation with the EU *acquis* as well as in launching and nourishing public debate and strengthening political cooperation towards joining the EU.

Parliamentary cooperation in South East Europe has been driven primarily by the legislative requirements of Western Balkans countries vis-à-vis the EU *acquis*. As a result, all of the regionally-led initiatives emerged out of the need to cooperate on issues related to Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP), i.e. the pathway to joining the EU.

The European Parliament is an important actor in the Western Balkans, regularly organising seminars for parliamentarians of the region on topics related to the EU *acquis*. Also, there are currently three regional initiatives: the *Regional Secretariat for Parliamentary Cooperation in South East Europe (RSPC SEE)*, the

Cetinje Parliamentary Forum (CPF) and the *Conference of the European Integration Parliamentary Committees of States participating to the Stabilisation and Association Process (COSAP)*. These initiatives lack adequate coordination and streamlining in their activities.

Regional priorities for 2011-2013 – Role of the RCC

The RCC has identified the following two priorities, aiming at strengthening parliamentary cooperation in the region and improving coordination between the initiatives:

- **Strengthening the parliamentary dimension of the work of SEEC** in particular in relation to the implementation of relevant aspects of the Final Declaration of the 8th Conference of the SEEC Speakers of Parliament.
- **Developing the Cetinje Parliamentary Forum** into a hub for enhanced coordination of parliamentary activities related to the EU *acquis* in the Western Balkans, through its institutionalisation and establishment of a sustainable Secretariat. The RCC shall contribute to setting up its Secretariat and provide political and technical support.

These priorities should be complementary, covering the broader South East Europe and the Western Balkan dimension of cooperation, respectively. The RSPC SEE was mandated to cover the broader cooperation between all SEEC participants, while the Cetinje Parliamentary Forum will support parliaments of candidate countries and potential candidates on issues related to the EU.

RCC work programme

On the basis of the above, the RCC will focus its efforts on the following actions in the period 2011-2013:

- **Assisting the SEECP in developing the parliamentary dimension of its work.** The RCC will contribute to the preparation of SEECP Speakers' of Parliament meetings, including drafting of related documents; it will also help in establishing a network of national coordinators at the level of Members of Parliament and will support the implementation of the relevant documents of the meetings. To that end, it will closely cooperate with the SEECP Troika as well as with the RSPC SEE. Particular emphasis shall also be put on maintaining beneficial interaction between the RSPC SEE and the RCC.
- **Assisting the institutionalisation of the Cetinje Parliamentary Forum** by contributing to setting up its Secretariat and providing political and technical support.

Parliamentary cooperation is an overarching topic within the RCC and an element of all RCC priority areas. Therefore, the RCC will also facilitate and assist national parliaments from the region to exchange of best practices and cooperate in the different priority areas, particularly on issues related to EU integration.

RCC Strategy and Work Programme 2011-2013

Work Programme Per Priority Area: Additional Information

ACTIONS	DESCRIPTION	EXPECTED RESULTS	PARTNERS	TIME FRAME
1. Transfer and management of the SEEIC	Take over responsibility and ensure SEE Investment Committee (SEEIC) is fully operational: complete handover of SEEIC; cooperate with regional partners in setting the agenda and organising the meetings of the SEEIC and its working groups in Sarajevo; solicit policy analysis and research on investment and business climate improvement in cooperation with other partners and stakeholders	Regionally-run SEEIC, operating smoothly as a consolidated regional platform for investment policy reform and a focal point and a catalyst for enhancement of the investment climate and related reforms	OECD EC National Administrations CEFTA Secretariat World Bank/IFC SEE PPP Network SEE Regional Network of Policy Makers Women Entrepreneurs Network BAC SWG RRD Regional Network of Investment Promotion Agencies (RNIPA) SEE CEL Chambers of Commerce and Industry Association of Balkan Chambers UN ECE	SEEIC transfer completed by December 2011; thereafter, regular annual plenary meetings and meetings of working groups (approximately 2 meetings per each working group per year)
2. Identifying ways and means for improving access to finance for private sector	Secure funding for, and help initiate studies to determine the opportunity and feasibility of establishing regionally-owned development finance vehicles Contribute to the establishment of business angel networks and/or other regional early-stage financing	Determine feasibility and build consensus with respect to regionally-owned financial vehicles Define avenues for further diversification and facilitation of private sector financing through:	National Administrations EC EBRD EIB CEB World Bank/IFC National Business Angels Networks	Stakeholder meetings on early-stage financing to be held during 2011; follow-up activities during 2012-13

ACTIONS	DESCRIPTION	EXPECTED RESULTS	PARTNERS	TIME FRAME
	<p>mechanisms through links with local/regional/European venture capital (VC), private equity (PE) and “business angels” players and associations</p>	<p>i. Increased availability of early-stage finance</p> <p>ii. Closer cooperation of capital markets and a single pool of liquidity available to regional operators;</p> <p>iii. Facilitation of foreign direct and portfolio investment.</p>	<p>Stock Exchanges Securities Registrars/ Regulators Chambers of Commerce and Industry USAID</p>	<p>Stakeholder meetings on capital markets to be held during 2011; follow-up activities during 2012-13</p>
	<p>Identify and address the gaps for further capital markets integration, in cooperation with national administrations, stock exchanges, regulators and other market institutions; possible avenues include convergence of accounting standards, comparable corporate governance practices, harmonisation of trading, introduction of regional indices, etc.</p>			
<p>3. Mainstreaming employment and social agenda into economic reform deliberations</p>	<p>Assist in reviving the activities of the Employment and Social Policy Network: ensure it meets on regular basis, support the establishment of a permanent secretariat, facilitate development of possible regional projects</p>	<p>Improved labour market outcomes and developed policies geared towards building flexibility and security in labour markets; common approach in developing labour and employment policies in line with the acquis</p>	<p>EC ILO CoE FES Adriatic Region Employers' Association SEE Health Network World Bank WHO ITUC IOE</p>	<p>Programming and, possible establishment of secretariat 2010-11; Possible ministerial conference 2011; Network fully and independently functional by 2013</p>
	<p>Contribute to the establishment of a regional consultative assembly composed of social partners and civil society</p> <p>Organise regional awareness-building events to support the implementation of EU acquis in the area of social cohesion</p>	<p>Establish a sustainable dialogue of social partners and civil society in economic policy-making at the regional level</p>	<p>Bilateral donors (incl. Belgium, Switzerland) Civil Society Organisations</p>	<p>Discussions on social partners' consultative assembly in 2010-11; further steps 2011-13</p>

ACTIONS	DESCRIPTION	EXPECTED RESULTS	PARTNERS	TIME FRAME
4. Promoting the Information Society	<p>Build renewed political support for the eSEE process and contribute to updating the eSEE Agenda Plus to reflect current realities as some of the agreed deadlines have not been met; refocus it on a smaller set of more realistic objectives that could have a deeper impact on the region.</p> <p>Establish a network of regional ICT research institutions and explore ways of building their capacities and closer linkages with the private sector</p>	Enhanced ICT adoption in public and private sector and improved regional coordination and exchange of good practice in ICT	<p>National Administrations EC OECD UNDP e SEE Initiative b SEE Initiative Centre for e-Governance Development SEE ICT Forum/Board National ICT Associations National ICT Research Institutes Regional RTD experts Regional research institutions</p>	<p>Regular meetings of the eSEE initiative 2010-2013</p> <p>Ministerial Conference on Information Society in SEE during 2010</p> <p>Network to be established in 2011; fully functional 2012-13</p> <p>Regional innovation platform and regional clusters established by 2013</p>
Outlier: Explore possibilities to assist the work of CEFTA	Contribute to possible establishment and operation of a Regional Academic Network on Trade	Strengthen regional capacities for research and analysis in trade to contribute to better understanding of current trends and support policy-making processes	<p>National Administrations CEFTA Secretariat EC World Bank</p>	<p>Advocacy for the quick implementation of SAP+ started in 2009; to continue until full implementation</p> <p>Regional academic network for CEFTA to be established and become fully operational in 2011</p>

II. INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENERGY

ACTIONS	DESCRIPTION	EXPECTED RESULTS	PARTNERS	TIME FRAME
<p>1. Continue implementation of Sustainable Energy Development Regional Initiative (SEDRI)</p>	<p>Offer administrative support for the further development of the initiative and its implementation</p> <p>Consider the replication of SEDRI to other infrastructure subsectors.</p>	<p>Small-scale sustainable energy facilities constructed in interested members from SEE (beneficiaries) providing economic, environmental, energy and social benefits and promoting possibilities for private sector involvement;</p> <p>Raised awareness of policy and decision-makers to support sustainable energy development and speed up decision-making process;</p> <p>Upgrade of legislative, institutional and regulatory frameworks what would be conducive to the development of sustainable regional energy sector;</p> <p>Improved cooperation, exchange of experience and networking and fostered synergy of activities with other international organisations and initiatives (EnC, UNECE EE21 Project, Regional Expert Network on Energy, NALAS etc.) as well as with and between beneficiaries;</p> <p>More media engagement to raise awareness of general public;</p> <p>Replication to other infrastructure subsectors.</p>	<p>CEI;</p> <p>Responsible beneficiaries' line ministries and other institutions including education, research and scientific;</p> <p>CSOs;</p> <p>associations of local authorities; media</p> <p>Regional Expert Network on Energy;</p> <p>EC;</p> <p>IFIs;</p> <p>Donor Community</p>	<p>SEDRI Task Force to be established in 2010;</p> <p>SEDRI TF meetings and related implementation activities with RCC administrative support 2010-2013 and afterwards</p>

ACTIONS	DESCRIPTION	EXPECTED RESULTS	PARTNERS	TIME FRAME
<p>2. Explore potential for cooperation with the Energy Community Secretariat (ECS)</p>	<p>Liaise with ECS to identify gaps where RCC could contribute. Possible areas:</p> <p>Co-organising and hosting workshops and discussions; facilitate discussions with regional and local authorities and experts; promoting good practices;</p>	<p>Improved regional cooperation in areas not or insufficiently covered by ECS, including possibly increased role and capacity of regional and local authorities and civil society in addressing Energy Community issues</p>	<p>ECS, Parliaments from SEE, Line ministries and other institutions, CSOs, EC, Associations of local authorities, Regional Expert Network on Energy, IFIs, Donor Community</p>	<p>Identifying potential for cooperation -2010 Support to the ECS, where necessary 2011-2013 and afterwards</p>
<p>3. Contribute to preparation and implementation of the Danube Region Strategy</p>	<p>Participate in relevant Danube Region Strategy meetings, bringing a regional SEE perspective. Ensure the participation of local authorities and civil society. Co-organise and host workshops and discussions to that end.</p> <p>Support media in raising public awareness on the Danube potentials, its role and increasing challenges;</p>	<p>Danube Region Strategy fully reflecting regional SEE perspective;</p> <p>Increased role and capacity of civil society and local authorities in addressing Danube issues;</p> <p>Raised public awareness on the Danube potentials, its role and increasing challenges;</p> <p>Increased media effectiveness in raising awareness;</p>	<p>EC, Ministries and other relevant institutions, Danube Commission, ICPDR, ISRBC Danube Cooperation Process RENA CSOs Media Donor Community REC SECI Other IOS</p>	<p>Preparatory activities in 2010; RCC support to Danube Region Strategy implementation 2011-2013 and afterwards</p>

ACTIONS	DESCRIPTION	EXPECTED RESULTS	PARTNERS	TIME FRAME
4. Explore the potential for further development of air services within the region	<p>Liaise with regional authorities and EC in order to prepare a feasibility study on further development of air services within the region.</p> <p>Facilitate discussions of the EC with regional authorities and experts in particular with regard to the ISIS (implementation of the SES in SEE) project.</p>	<p>More and better air services within the region (passenger and freight) based on full application and better use of market access provided for in the ECAA Agreement;</p>	<p>EC; Civil Aviation Organisations; Ministries; Air traffic agencies and centres; Flight operators and related industries EASA; AEA; ACI</p>	<p>Mapping, communication and consultations with CSOs, ALAs and media in 2010; workshops and discussions in 2011-2012; meetings and project proposals preparation 2012-2013 and afterwards;</p> <p>Regional expert network on energy initiated 2009; preparatory phase 2010; network operational 2011-2013; network self-sustainable 2014</p> <p>Launching the ToR in 2010; FS to be completed in 2012; possible follow up activities based on FS with RCC administrative support in 2012.</p>

ACTIONS	DESCRIPTION	EXPECTED RESULTS	PARTNERS	TIME FRAME
<p>5. Contribute to promotion of road safety</p>	<p>Ensure follow-up to April 2010 Conference on Road Infrastructure Safety Management. Explore possibilities (jointly with UNECE) to organise in 2011 a ministerial conference to provide high-level multisectoral policy platform;</p> <p>Raise public awareness on critical road safety issues;</p> <p>Hold discussions with responsible authorities, EC and road safety experts; identify gaps and propose actions to overcome such gaps; promote good practices;</p>	<p>Facilitated implementation of safety rules and standards;</p> <p>Reduced number of road fatalities and injuries;</p> <p>Improved road users behaviour;</p> <p>Increased media efficiency in raising public awareness;</p> <p>Facilitated transfer of best practice and experience;</p> <p>More efficient dissemination of findings of road-safety research projects;</p>	<p>Ministries and other relevant institutions, EC, ERSO, UNECE, ERF, IRF, WB, WHO, CGRS, SEETO, GRSP, Media, IRTAD</p> <p>Associations of Local Authorities</p> <p>CSOs</p> <p>Academia</p> <p>Private sector</p>	<p>2011-2013: Follow-up to April 2010 Conference on Road Infrastructure Safety Management</p>

III. JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

ACTIONS	DESCRIPTION	EXPECTED RESULTS	PARTNERS	TIME FRAME
<p>1. Coordinate drafting and adoption of Regional Strategy and Action Plan on Justice and Home Affairs, and monitoring of its implementation</p>	<p>Work with relevant stakeholders to prepare a Strategic JHA Regional document which will direct co-operation and co-ordination in next three years. The strategy and action plan will include: a plan for a system for monitoring and evaluating regional cooperation, with benchmarks and indicators; a chart of regional actions, initiatives-institutions and programmes, mapping existing technical assistance activities and identifying lessons learned, gaps and overlapping. Explore institutional, financial and legal means to confer regional ownership to the PCC-SEE Secretariat</p> <p>Coordinate the monitoring and implementation of the Strategy.</p>	<p>A sustainable, coherent, transparent and coordinated regional strategy and coordination which will provide guidance for monitoring regional progress, circulating and assessing information, facilitating cooperation among regional actors and donors' coordination and raising the visibility of regional organisation.</p>	<p>Regional Organisations RCC SEE Members International Organisations</p>	<p>2 meetings of the Steering Group for Regional Strategy for 2010 ;</p> <p>Conference for adoption of the Strategy at the end of 2010;</p> <p>Monitoring and reporting on Strategy implementation with RCC administrative support 2011 - 2013</p>
<p>2. Strengthen judicial and prosecutorial cooperation in criminal matters</p>	<p>Establish a working group to study prerequisites for closer cooperation on police operations, police and prosecution services in criminal investigations, sharing of information on issues affecting the police, prosecution and court services</p>	<p>Balance discrepancy in cooperation between police, prosecutors and judiciary</p>	<p>Regional Organisations RCC SEE Members UNODC</p>	<p>Initiate consultations in 2010; proceed 2011 – 2013 with RCC administrative support; finalise in 2013</p>

ACTIONS	DESCRIPTION	EXPECTED RESULTS	PARTNERS	TIME FRAME
	<p>Organise regional meetings of the SEE Ministries of Justice, General Prosecutors and Judicial Councils.</p> <p>Improve cooperation between SEEPAG and the Western Balkans Prosecutors' Network.</p>	<p>Improved judiciary and prosecutorial cooperation in fighting organised crime and dangerous forms of criminality</p>	<p>Regional Organisations RCC SEE Members CoE</p>	<p>1st Prosecutors' General Regional Meeting and decisions adopted in 2010</p> <p>1st Judicial Councils Regional Meeting and decisions adopted in 2011</p> <p>proceeding 2011 - 2013 with RCC administrative support</p>
<p>3. Support existing initiatives in the area of fight against corruption</p>	<p>Support RAI in assessing regional anticorruption field, identifying gaps and needs of anticorruption agencies and ensuring coordination with other operative bodies/networks.</p> <p>Support RAI in assisting SEE countries in the implementation of GRECO recommendations, expanding RAI's capacity on money laundering and economic crime, and enhancing cooperation with other actors (e.g. GRECO, OLAF, MONEYVAL, FATF).</p>	<p>Improved and extended functioning of RAI, resulting in more regionally coordinated and efficient fight against corruption</p>	<p>Regional Organisations RCC SEE Members, RAI, EC, CoE, UNODC, UNDP, OECD</p>	<p>1st RCC- RAI meeting on specialised agencies and decisions adopted 2011</p> <p>Proceeding 2011 - 2013 with RCC administrative support</p>

ACTIONS	DESCRIPTION	EXPECTED RESULTS	PARTNERS	TIME FRAME
4. Support MARRI in strengthening its capacity	Support MARRI in organising operational meetings and cooperation activities on illegal migration and in organising periodic meetings of the Heads of Consular Sections of the SEECP countries	Improved and extended functioning of MARRI, resulting in more regionally coordinated and efficient management of migration issues	MARRI PCC Secretariat SEPCA SECI/SELEC SEEPAG RCC SEE Members IOM, ICMPD	Initiate in 2010 First meetings in 2011 Proceeding 2011 - 2013 with RCC administrative support
5. Initiate regional cooperation in private and civil law matters and in protection of fundamental rights	Establish a network of mutual legal assistance contact points in civil law matters; co-organise and host conferences, workshops and discussions, identify gaps and propose actions to overcome gaps, in the area of co-operation in civil matters; support media and civil society in raising public awareness on cooperation in civil law matters Exchange information and share best practices at the regional level regarding the protection of fundamental rights within the agreed RCC priority areas.	Cooperation in civil law matters which are not yet covered by regional partners. Raised awareness of public authorities in their obligation to ensure free movement of persons, goods, services and capital Improved mutual legal assistance in civil matters Strengthened protection of fundamental rights, minorities and vulnerable groups. Citizens become aware of their rights and benefit from judicial protection of free movement of persons, goods, services and capital	CoE EC Regional Organisations RCC SEE Members Civil society, Academia , Associations of Legal Professionals	Initiate consultation in 2010 Proceeding 2010 - 2013 with RCC administrative support

ACTIONS	DESCRIPTION	EXPECTED RESULTS	PARTNERS	TIME FRAME
<p>1. Facilitate and support development of regional mechanisms in the area of security</p>	<p>The RCC will continue to facilitate and support the development of the SEE Defence Policy Directors Forum, the SEE National Authorities Information Security Forum and the SEE Defence Intelligence Chiefs Forum (with the support of the EUMS Intelligence Directorate, within the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU). It will also facilitate and support the development of a SEE Counter-Intelligence Chiefs Forum and a Regional forum on Civilian Experts Capacity Building in the security sector</p> <p>The RCC will initiate two Working Groups comprised of experts from SEE MoD-GS to discuss Peace Support Operations (PSO) and Security Sector Reforms (SSR), respectively.</p> <p>It will also contribute to building operational links between Regional Initiatives and Organisations (RI&O) in the security and defence cooperation sector</p> <p>SEE Regional mapping and establishing a Registry of NGOs working on security and defence issues;</p> <p>Secure inclusion and participation of Civil Society organisations - across the region in security and defence</p>	<p>Sustainable, integrated and transparent regionally owned cooperation mechanisms between relevant governmental instances for security cooperation (defence policy directors. National authorities for information security, defence intelligence and counter-intelligence chiefs, civilian expert capacity building)</p> <p>Exchange of experience at regional level on PSO and SSR</p> <p>Preserve and streamline the effective RI&TFs which prove their capability to deliver tangible results in Security area.</p>	<p>RCC SEE Members, NATO, GS Council of EU, SEDM, SEEC, US-Adriatic Charter, RACVIAC, SEESAC NGOs</p>	<p>Meetings to take place once/twice a year with RCC administrative support 2011 - 2013</p> <p>Initiated in 2009</p> <p>First meetings in 2009 - 2010</p> <p>Proceeding 2011 - 2013 with RCC administrative support of the RCC</p> <p>Project under development by a consortium of NGO's in SEE in 2010. Project implementation to begin in 2011. First regional meeting of NGO's in the security and defence area in 2012</p>

ACTIONS	DESCRIPTION	EXPECTED RESULTS	PARTNERS	TIME FRAME
<p>2. Continue work towards establishment of regional structures for disaster reduction</p>	<p>Facilitate the establishment of sustainable, integrated and transparent regionally-owned cooperation mechanisms between government establishments relevant for Fire Fighting in cooperation with relevant actors and the alignment of regional mechanisms with the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.</p> <p>Harmonise regional and national structures with EU Civil Protection Mechanism in view of full participation in the Mechanism, once the conditions are met.</p>	<p>SEE Fire fighting Regional Centre network (SEEFREC) established</p>	<p>RCC SEE Members, WB, UNISDR, EC DG ECHO, DPPI</p>	<p>ToR on fire vulnerability to be developed in 2010-2011, second meeting in 2011, Establishment of Regional Centres in 2010, Net-work link in 2013.</p>
<p>3. Assist in the implementation of the World Bank project on the South East and Central European Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility (SECE CRIF).</p>	<p>Provide political support to the World Bank for the development of the SECE-CRIF project.</p> <p>Participate in Facility as member of the Board. Contribute to SEE regional approach and inclusiveness of the project.</p> <p>Provide administrative and secretarial support to regional fora in the process of being established.</p>	<p>Successful development of the activities South East and Central European Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility (SECE CRIF), in order to increase the abilities of the governments of the region reduce their fiscal liability for natural disasters.</p>	<p>SEE Countries, UN ISDR, WB</p>	<p>Register Company 2010, WB Loans - 2010 - 2013, Implementation 2013</p>

ACTIONS	DESCRIPTION	EXPECTED RESULTS	PARTNERS	TIME FRAME
<p>1. Taking over coordination of Ljubljana Process</p>	<p>Set up a new and transitional operational framework for the Ljubljana Process II</p> <p>Establish a RCC Task Force on Culture and Society and set up a TF secretariat, national task forces and an international experts' pool</p> <p>Assist preparation of feasibility studies leading to public-private investments for rehabilitation projects</p> <p>Publish preliminary technical assessments, for all projects elaborated for monuments and sites that have been designated as priority</p> <p>Organise professional training courses, workshops, seminars, study visits, school programmes</p> <p>Promote cultural diversity and dissemination activities</p>	<p>Ljubljana Process operating efficiently and developing under regional coordination. Sustained regional co-operation framework supports the long-term management of national and regional heritage rehabilitation strategies by the countries themselves.</p> <p>Well-prepared regional rehabilitation projects</p> <p>Increased public awareness and visibility of actions focusing on social and economic impact of rehabilitation projects and the role of heritage in sustainable development strategies</p>	<p>Ministries of Culture of WB RCC Task Force on Culture and Society and international secretariat EC, CoE</p> <p>Civil societies and NGOs</p>	<p>Preparatory phase 2009-2010</p> <p>Taking over of the Ljubljana Process by January 2011</p> <p>Operational period: January 2011- December 2013</p> <p>Completion: December 2013</p>
<p>2. Support to education reform, with emphasis on higher education</p>	<p>Chair the Steering group for guiding and monitoring progress of higher education structural reform which will be established under the umbrella of RCC. Planned activities include sharing experience concerning higher education reform; qualification system development; identification of common qualifications; benchmarking with the best EU practice;</p>	<p>Increased regional cooperation in higher education reform</p> <p>Enhanced convergence with European Higher Education Policy including Bologna reforms.</p> <p>Establishment of Joint Degree Programmes for undergraduate and post-graduate studies in the region.</p>	<p>Universities from the region</p> <p>Ministries of Education and Science of WB</p> <p>Ministries of Education and Science and Universities from EU Member States</p>	<p>Constituting phase: 2009-2010;</p> <p>Operational period: January 2011- October 2015</p>

ACTIONS	DESCRIPTION	EXPECTED RESULTS	PARTNERS	TIME FRAME
	<p>cooperation with the EU Member States; strengthening capacity of administrators and policy makers in the institutions with responsibility in higher education; and direct involvement of all relevant parties in the Region, in finding feasible joint solutions for current challenges in higher education reform. They will be realised in coordination with other regional and European initiatives such as the Regional Qualification Network for South-East Europe, EHEA Qualification Network and networks of the European Network of Information Centres (ENIC) and National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC). It will lead to improving transparency of qualifications which would allow for better mobility of students and academics within the region.</p> <p>Providing support to the further development of ERI SEE.</p> <p>Facilitating the development of possible regional projects and promotion of identified regional priorities.</p>	<p>National qualifications systems closer to the common European reference framework; improved cooperation within the region in creation of National Qualification Frameworks.</p> <p>Greater mobility of students and academics within the region.</p> <p>Enhanced sustainability of ERI SEE as a regionally-owned platform.</p> <p>Development of regional projects, in cooperation with relevant partners.</p>	<p>ERI SEE, RCC TF FBHC, EC, CoE, SEECEL</p> <p>Regional Employers Association</p>	

ACTIONS	DESCRIPTION	EXPECTED RESULTS	PARTNERS	TIME FRAME
<p>Outlier: Explore the possibilities for further activities in the area of education</p>	<p>Explore the possibilities for further activities in the area of education, in cooperation with the TF FBHC and other relevant initiatives.</p>	<p>Improved cooperation in matters relating to education in general</p>	<p>Ministries of Education, Science, Culture and Research of the region EC TF FBHC ERI SEE</p>	
<p>3. Development of Regional Strategy for Research and Development for Innovation for the Western Balkans</p>	<p>Facilitate regional experts in development of Regional Strategy: Identify existing research capacities Explore potential for developing networking and interconnections between researchers and institutions Coordinate establishment of assessment criteria Explore possibilities for extended financing of R&D</p>	<p>Strengthened innovative capacity of Western Balkans/ Revitalisation of Institutes and R&D capacities Improved existing and created new networks of researchers and scientists from the Western Balkans; Improved administrative capacities for cooperation in the area of Research and Development; Defined Regional Centres of Excellence in R&D; Established cooperation mechanisms among R&D, higher education and business sectors; Increased knowledge transfer in SEE; Integration of WB region in ERA</p>	<p>Ministries of Education and Science of the Western Balkans Research Institutes from the region EC World Bank Steering Platform for Research for the WB</p>	<p>Constituting Phase: April 2009- November 2011, Operational period: Nov. 2011- Nov. 2013 Completion: November 2013</p>

VI. PARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION

ACTIONS	DESCRIPTION	EXPECTED RESULTS	PARTNERS	TIME FRAME
<p>1 . Assisting the development of the parliamentary dimension of the SEECP</p>	<p>Assist in the preparation of the working documents for SEECP Speakers of Parliament meetings</p> <p>Organise regular meetings through the network of MP national coordinators</p> <p>Support the implementation of the Final Declaration of the 8th Conference of the Speakers of Parliaments of the SEECP</p>	<p>Enhanced cooperation on Speakers of Parliament level aimed at institutionalising dialogue</p> <p>Established permanent forum /national coordinators' network on MP level</p> <p>Further institutionalization and strengthening of SEECP parliamentary dimension.</p>	<p>SEECP national parliaments</p> <p>RSPC SEE</p> <p>SEECP CIO and Troika</p>	<p>2010 - on going</p>
<p>2 . Assisting the institutionalisation of Cetinje Parliamentary Forum</p>	<p>Contribute to set up a Secretariat</p> <p>Elaborate project which would be eligible for possible future financing.</p> <p>Organise seminars for MPs, experts and parliamentary committees on issues related to EU integration</p>	<p>Cetinje Parliamentary Forum serves as a regional WB hub for coordination of EU-related activities</p> <p>Strengthened cooperation/mutual assistance - among parliaments on EU legislation</p>	<p>WB Parliaments</p> <p>European Parliament</p> <p>EC</p>	<p>2010 - on going</p>

ANNEX I

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACI	Airport Council International Europe
AEA	Association of the European Airlines
ALAs	Association of Local Authorities
BAC	Business Advisory Council
bSEE Task Force	Broadband South Eastern Europe Task Force
CEB	Council of Europe Development Bank
CEFTA	Central European Free Trade Agreement
CEI	Central European Initiative
CGRS	Commission for Global Road Safety
CoE	Council of Europe
CoMoCoSEE	Council of Ministers of Culture of South-East Europe
CPF	Cetinje Parliamentary Forum
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DPPI	Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative
EASA	European Aviation Safety Agency
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EC	European Commission
ECS	Energy Community Secretariat
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EIB	European Investment Bank
ENIC	European Network of Information Centres
ERF	European Union Road Federation
ERI SEE	Education Reform Initiative for South Eastern Europe
ERSO	European Road Safety Observatory
eSEE Initiative	Electronic South Eastern Europe Initiative
EUMS	European Union Military Staff
FATF	Financial Action Task Force
FES	Friedrich Ebert Foundation
GRECO	Group of States against Corruption
GRSP	Global Road Safety Partnership
GS Council of EU	General Secretariat Council of European Union
ICMPD	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
ICPDR	International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IFC	International Finance Corporation

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IFIs	International Financial Institutions
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOE	International Organization of Employers
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IOs	International Organizations
IRF	International Road Federation
IRTAD	International Road Traffic and Accident Database
ISRBC	International Sava River Basin Commission
ITUC	International Trade Union Confederation
MARRI	Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative
MONEYVAL	Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism
NARIC	National Academic Recognition Information Centres
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OLAF	European Antifraud Office
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PCC Secretariat	Police Cooperation Convention Secretariat
PE	Private Equity
PPP	Public Private Partnership
PSO	Peace Support Operations
RACVIAC	Center for Security Cooperation
RAI	Regional Anticorruption Initiative
RCC TF FBHC	RCC Task Force Fostering and Building Human Capital
REC	Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe
RENA	Regional Environmental Network for Accession
ReSPA	Regional School of Public Administration
RI&O	Regional Initiatives and Organisations
RNIPA	Regional Network of Investment Promotion Agencies
RSPC SEE	Regional Secretariat for Parliamentary Cooperation in South East Europe
RTD	Research and Technical Development
SAP+	Stabilization and Association Process Plus (cumulation zone with EU, EFTA, Western Balkans and Turkey)
SECE CRIF	South East and Central European Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility
SECI	Southeast European Cooperative Initiative
SECI Center	Southeast European Cooperative Initiative, Regional Centre for Combating Organized Crime

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SEDM	South East Europe Defense Ministerial
SEEC	South East Europe Clearing House
SEE CEL	South East Europe Center for Entrepreneurial Learning
SEECIP	South East European Cooperation Process
SEE-ERA.NET	South East European - European Research Area Network
SEE-ERA.NET PLUS	South East European - European Research Area Network Plus
SEEFREC	SEE Fire fighting Regional Centre network
SEEIC	South East Europe Investment Committee
SELEC	Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre
SEE MoD-GS	South East Europe Ministries of Defense and General Staffs
SEE PPP Network	South East Europe Public Private Partnership Network
SEEPAG	Southeast European Prosecutors Advisory Group
SEPCA	Southeast Europe Police Chiefs Association
SEESAC	South East Europe Small Arms and Light Weapons Clearing House
SEETO	South- East Europe Transport Observatory
SSR	Security Sector Reforms
SWG RRD	Standing Working Group on Regional Rural Development
ToR	Term of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNISDR	United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VC	Venture Capital
WB	World Bank
Western Balkans COSAP	Conference of the European Integration Parliamentary Committees of States participating in the Stabilisation and Association Process
WHO	World Health Organization

Overview of Regional Initiatives and Task Forces in South East Europe

Introduction

Since its establishment, the RCC Secretariat has focused on developing working relationships with all relevant regional initiatives (RIs) and task forces (TFs). In Annex II of its Strategy and Work Programme 2011-2013, the RCC offers a comprehensive overview of those which belong to its core or wider network. Each of them includes several SEEC countries as well as countries outside the SEEC area, depending on the format of the initiative. Other factors differentiating among the RIs and TFs are their relevance for the RCC in respect of its operation, within the RCC framework or outside of it, as well as the intensity of mutual operational links established.

The overview comprises 40 regional entities among which two are in the constitutive phase (SEE Women Entrepreneurs Network and Women Police Officer Network (WPON)). The number of regional initiatives and task forces has dramatically increased since the year 2000, and especially in the last couple of years. This reflects a strong demand in the region for a greater number of regional structures aimed at speeding up reforms, solving common horizontal problems or those of trans-boundary nature and reinforcing the regional component of the European and Euro-Atlantic integration.

Having a broad regional perspective, the RCC has added value to streamlining,

coordinating and informing different regional initiatives, while establishing itself as an important interlocutor with these structures and the international community. Given the varied stage of development of existing initiatives and structures, the RCC Secretariat has adjusted its level of involvement to match the needs of the specific initiatives and structures. In addition to existing cooperation mechanisms, the RCC is also building consensus for new regional initiatives and task forces and opening up new areas for regional cooperation.

The RCC will further consolidate the normative framework for regional cooperation taking account of existing RI/TFs. It has developed close relations with them and has signed Memoranda of Understanding on cooperation. Other MoUs may follow.

The RCC will, in close cooperation with the SEEC, continue with the process of streamlining of regional taskforces and initiatives with the aim of achieving enhanced effectiveness, synergy and coherence. The key criteria for streamlining should be the effectiveness and added value of each regional taskforce or initiative. In this respect, at the initiative of the SEEC, the RCC shall prepare proposals for concrete actions to be taken and recommend possible future steps.

1. Economic and Social Development

In the Economic and Social Development priority area, the RCC is partnering with 15 regional initiatives - eight promoting business and investment climate in SEE; five contributing to social cohesion; and two connected to the promotion of the information/knowledge- based society. These regional initiatives and structures are bestowing to the RCC, as a non-implementing agency, the ability to intervene and achieve objectives in its main areas of involvement within economic and social development. Interaction of the RCC with these structures is twofold - activities aimed at providing institutional support (such as political support, legal advice, best practice dissemination, fund-raising facilitation, etc.) and RCC expertise (helping set the agenda, defining priority areas and objectives, streamlining with other stakeholders, etc.). The degree of RCC involvement with regional partners varies according to the level of development of the initiative and its scope of work. A good example of RCC's intervention is the SEE Public Private Partnership Network, which has been established with a high level of political, organisational, logistic, fund-raising and networking involvement of the RCC.

With a couple of regional initiatives, the RCC has developed common programmes and joint activities, provided systematic

exchange of information, as well as transfer of knowledge and joint training facilities (SEE Investment Committee, CEFTA 2006, Centre for eGovernance Development, eSEE Initiative, SEE Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning, Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group of SEE). It also helped some regional initiatives to widen the scope of their partnerships and identify interested donors.

1. SEE Investment Committee (SEEIC) - Paris (to be transferred to Sarajevo)

SEEIC is a high-level coordination body that supports the implementation of policies promoting foreign and domestic investment. It aims to develop guidelines for implementation of policy reforms along the priority areas identified in the Investment Reform Index (IRI) and monitor implementation of the OECD Regional Framework for Investment. Members of SEEIC include Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, and Serbia. SEEIC was launched in 2007 after the signature of a ministerial statement on the regional framework for investment in SEE, in Vienna, on 27th June 2006.

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SEEIC will act as the investment policy arm of the RCC. By April 2011, the SEE Investment Committee, supported by the Regional Cooperation Council Secretariat, will be fully responsible for management and coordination of regional activities to improve the investment climate.

2. Central European Free Trade Agreement 2006 (CEFTA) - Brussels

CEFTA, in its current form, came into existence through the Agreement to amend and enlarge the Central European Free Trade - CEFTA 2006 that was signed by Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (under its constitutional name), Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia and UNMIK/Kosovo. The main objectives of the agreement are to expand trade in goods and services and foster investment by means of fair, stable and predictable rules, eliminate barriers to trade between the members, provide appropriate protection of intellectual property rights in accordance with international standards and harmonize provisions on modern trade policy issues, such as competition rules and state aid. The CEFTA Secretariat provides technical and administrative support to CEFTA structures in regional trade liberalization efforts. The Secretariat was established in 2008, after the decision of the Joint Committee of CEFTA in Ohrid on 28th September 2007.

The RCC will continue its support to the CEFTA Secretariat on specific issues and initiatives that it deems important for increasing access to markets for regional companies, such as diagonal cumulation of origin and labour mobility. RCC will also extend its support to the operation of CEFTA 2006 Regional Academic Network.

3. CEFTA Forum of Chambers of Commerce, rotating

The forum has been created to promote CEFTA to its members and allow for better dialogue with governments and CEFTA structures. The Chambers have established working groups that mirror the CEFTA structures - Working Group on Agriculture, Working Group on Customs and Working Group on Non-Tariff Barriers. Members include Chambers of Commerce from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia and UNMIK/Kosovo.

4. Business Advisory Council for SEE (BACSEE or BAC) - Thessaloniki

BAC serves as the private sector arm of RCC. BAC aims to articulate and reflect the concerns and proposals of the private sector regarding the reconstruction and development process of the Balkans. BAC membership includes international investors and business representatives from more than 20 countries. The declaration on establishment of BAC for SEE was adopted in Skopje on 11th December 2002. Members include businessmen from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Turkey, UNMIK/Kosovo etc.

By acting as the private sector arm of RCC, BAC provides advice and information to the RCC on private sector-related issues.

5. SEE Public Private Partnership Network (SEEPPPN) - Zagreb (temporarily)

The role of SEEPPPN is to coordinate regional exchange of knowledge and expertise on PPPs, support assessment and propose measures for further development and harmonization of South East Europe's PPP environment, and identify viable regional infrastructure development projects. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Turkey, and UNMIK/Kosovo are part of the Network. SEEPPPN was established by a ministerial statement on Public-Private Partnerships for Infrastructure Development in South East Europe signed in Sarajevo, on 25th September 2009 and the temporary Secretariat of the Network is located at the PPP Agency of the Republic of Croatia.

6. Regional Network of National Investment Promotion Agencies in the SEE Region (RNIPA), rotating

RNIPA aims to promote investment potential and encourage activities relating to economic cooperation among SEE countries. The agencies will share their experience and information about foreign investment promotion and partner on investment promotion efforts. Agencies from Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia are part of the Network. The MoU on the establishment of RNIPA was signed in Vienna on 8th June 2009.

RCC envisions close cooperation with RNIPA in promoting SEE as a single market for foreign investment.

7. SEE Regional Network of Policy Makers - Belgrade (IFC)

Based on an initiative of the International Finance Corporation, the Network was established in 2007 at the Regional Conference on Business Environment Reform in South East Europe, held in Zagreb. Its aim is to support business environment reform in the region by facilitating exchange of experiences among policymakers, and to strengthen the competitiveness of local and national economies. The Network is an open community of professionals who play a role in business environment reform - participants from national and sub-national governments and administrations, parliaments, business community, academic experts, international and local experts, donors, and other stakeholders whose contribution is necessary to support private sector development and sustain economic growth. Members come from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

8. SEE Women Entrepreneurs Network - to be established

RCC intends to establish a network of women entrepreneurs in SEE as part of an effort to support women entrepreneurship in SEE. The network will help advocate, exchange experiences and provide political support in building an environment conducive to women in business throughout SEE. The Network will include members

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from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Moldova, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Turkey and UNMIK/Kosovo. The network will be developed in cooperation with the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce Working Group on Women Entrepreneurship.

9. The Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group of SEE (RRDSWG) - Skopje

RRDSWG is an intergovernmental organisation for regional rural development in SEE, which serves as a platform for regional cooperation in the field of agriculture, food, rural economic development and trade with agro and food products. It was founded based on the conclusions of Leipzig Agricultural Policy Forum in 2004 and Agricultural Policy Forum in 2005. Members include Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, UNMIK/Kosovo. The RCC and the RRDSWG signed a MoU on Cooperation in the Area of Agriculture, Rural and Economic Development, Environmental Protection and Food Safety in 2009.

10. Association of Balkan Chambers, rotating

The Association of Balkan Chambers of Commerce was established in 1994 with the aim of assisting business activities in the Balkans. Members include Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Turkey and Serbia. The main

priorities of ABC are: development of cooperation among the business communities in the Balkan region, as well as with third parties; encouragement and support of activities aimed at structural changes in the economies of Balkan countries with the view to EU accession; initiation and implementation of global interest projects for the Balkan region; representing, through the Association, interests of the member Chambers in front of international bodies; joint participation in EU programmes and other partnership programmes.

11. SEE Employment and Social Policy Network (SEESPEN)

Based on the Bucharest Declaration of 2003, a permanent high-level committee has periodically met to review national employment policies and quality of service delivery in employment services and improvement of programmes specifically designed for vulnerable groups. Members include Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and UNMIK/Kosovo. Currently, the committee has evolved into the Employment and Social Policy Network for SEE.

Taking stock of the achievements of country reviews of employment policies and based on the conclusions of Budva Ministerial Meeting in October 2007, the Network will act as a permanent regional working-level cooperation mechanism for sharing, disseminating, and managing knowledge and good practices in the realm of employment and social policy.

12. Centre of Public Employment Services of SEE Countries (CPESSEC), rotating

CPESSEC is a regional non-profit organisation that unites national public institutions or government departments responsible for the implementation of labour market policies or for manpower management. Established in 2009, CPESSEC aims to facilitate the exchange of information and experiences in all activities related to providing services to employers, and job-seekers and to improving the capacities of public employment services in South East Europe.

Members include Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, and Turkey. The RCC supports the activities of the Centre and is interested in ensuring its closer links with the SEE Employment and Social Policy Network. The CPESSEC was established by a partnership protocol signed in 2006 in Sofia. Guidelines for operation were approved in 2007 in Belgrade.

13. SEE Trade Union Forum (SEETUF) - Zagreb/Sarajevo

The South East European Trade Union Forum was established in 1999. Bringing together the heads of national trade unions of SEE countries, its purpose is to promote the social dimension of ongoing economic reforms in the region. Members come from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, UNMIK/Kosovo.

14. Adriatic Region Employers' Centre (AREC) - Zagreb

AREC was established in 2008 to formalize the structure of regional cooperation among organisations of employers in SEE. The purpose of the Centre - which will also be open to other business associations - is to promote projects, cooperation and exchange of views and knowledge between partners in the region. It also promotes a business-friendly environment favourable to local and foreign investments as well as representing regional business associations vis-à-vis major international partners. The statute of the Adriatic Region Employers' Centre (AREC) was adopted on 27th March 2008. Members come from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

RCC is committed to promoting bi-partite and tri-partite social dialogue at the regional level and advocating the inclusion of social partners in government policy-making.

15. SEE Health Network - Skopje

Founded in 2001 based on the Dubrovnik Pledge, the SEE Health Network is a political forum set up to coordinate, implement and evaluate the commitments of Dubrovnik Pledge and its regional projects for developing health policy and services. The main purpose of the Network is to provide leadership and sustain project ownership by the countries in the region. SEE Health Network is supported by a Secretariat located in Skopje, and the members include Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia,

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Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia.

The RCC and the SEEHN have signed an MoU on their future cooperation. RCC will continue providing political support and representation to the SEE Health Network and its regional activities and assist the Network in coordinating its activities with other initiatives relevant to regional cooperation in the area of public health.

16. Centre for eGovernance Development (CeGD) - Ljubljana

CeGD was established in January 2008 as a PPP effort in order to address training, educational, consulting and research issues related to eGovernance throughout the region. CeGD is a decentralized regional network of programmes and training support, with an administrative focal point situated in Ljubljana, Slovenia, providing an overall coordination to regional activities.

RCC participates in the management and supervisory boards of CeGD and sets the agenda for regional knowledge-sharing and capacity-building in the area of online public services.

17. eSEE Initiative (Sarajevo) and bSEE Task Force

The Electronic South Eastern Europe (eSEE) Initiative was launched in Istanbul in October 2000 and is supported by the eSEE Secretariat hosted in Sarajevo by UNDP Bosnia and Herzegovina Country Office since 2002. The aim of the eSEE Initiative is to better integrate SEE countries into the global knowledge-based economy by

regionally supporting the development of Information Society. Members include Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, and UNMIK/Kosovo. The Broadband South East Europe (bSEE) Task Force was formed following the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding on Development of Unified Market of Broadband Networks at the Ministerial Conference in Thessaloniki (2005). Both eSEE Initiative and bSEE Task Force operate under the RCC umbrella to promote a single, open and competitive regional ICT market.

2. Infrastructure and Energy

Regional cooperation in the field of energy and infrastructure is characterized by the involvement of a variety of regional and international organizations, initiatives, task forces, programmes, projects, cooperation frameworks and networks etc. The major RCC partners are described below. The EC plays a prominent role in their establishment and operation. Particular EC support relates to the Energy Community and the future Transport Community, as functional integration with the EU acquis in energy and transport is progressing much faster than in most other areas.

1. Energy Community Secretariat (ECS) - Vienna

The Energy Community is the major framework for regional energy cooperation as well as cooperation between the Contracting Parties (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, UNMIK/Kosovo pursuant to the UNSCR 1244/99 and Moldova) and the EU; RCC Secretariat is strongly supported by the ECS in building parliamentary capacity in SEE to deal with energy reforms. The RCC and ECS are considering the joint organization of additional projects and events.

The ECS is set up by the 2005 Treaty Establishing the Energy Community. Its main role is to promote creation of regional electricity and gas markets and their integration into a wider single EU energy market. In that respect, ECS tasks are: “to provide administrative support to other Energy Community institutions (the Ministerial Council, the Permanent High Level Group, the Regulatory Board and the Fora); to review the proper implementation by the Parties of their obligations under this Treaty, and submit yearly progress reports to the Ministerial Council; to review and assist in the coordination by the European Commission of the donors’ activity in the territories of the Contracting Parties, and provide administrative support to the donors; to carry out other tasks conferred on it under this Treaty or by a Procedural Act of the Ministerial Council, excluding the power to take Measures; and to adopt Procedural Acts”.

The ECS budget is financed by the EU (94.9%) and the balance is covered by the Contracting Parties.

The RCC Secretariat’s communication and cooperation with the ECS is well established and is expected to increase in the future.

2. South East Europe Transport Observatory (SEETO) - Belgrade/ Transport Community

SEETO is a regional initiative established to promote cooperation in the development of regional transport. The Core Regional Transport Network has been defined in the MoU on development of the SEE Core Regional Transport Network, signed in June 2004. The SEETO Steering Committee (SC) was established to implement the MoU with the support of SEETO Permanent Secretariat, which has been fully operational since 2005. The following activities are within SEETO`s scope of work: analyzing performance of the SEE Core Regional Transport Network; registering the progress made in the achievement of MoU`s provisions; drafting and updating the Multi Annual Plan (MAP), including organization of regular reviews of MAP; and supporting the SC in promoting policy reform and harmonization in transport sector.

Contributions to the SEETO operational budget are provided by each SEE participant (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and UNMIK/Kosovo pursuant to the UNSCR 1244/99).

As far as cooperation with SEETO is concerned, the RCC Secretariat has initiated certain activities regarding elaboration of regional transport projects aimed at ensuring accelerated economic and social development of the region through raised infrastructural capacities. SEETO representatives are regularly informed and invited to attend events organized by the RCC Secretariat and vice versa.

The Transport Community Treaty currently under negotiation with the SEE Parties (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo under UNSCR 1244/99) is expressly designed to fully integrate the region into the European Transport family and complement the enlargement policy of the EU. The Treaty builds on: (a) the MoU on development of the South East Europe Core Regional Transport Network of 11 June 2004, (b) the Addendum to the MoU for South East European Railway Transport Area of 4 December 2007 as well as, where relevant (c) the existing treaties for the Energy Community and the Common Aviation Area.

The Transport Community shall be based on the progressive integration of regional transport market into the European Union transport market on the basis of relevant acquis of the Union, including in the areas of technical standards, interoperability, safety, security, traffic management, social policy, public procurement and environment for all modes of transport excluding air transport. The overall priority is to have sustainable, affordable, efficient and safe transport in SEE introducing an additional challenge of more visible competition between the different transport modes. The RCC will pay due attention in supporting the commitments under the Izmir Ministerial Declaration on the Development of a New Common Vision for Transport Sector within the SEECF Region, (11 March 2010, Izmir, Turkey) and in particular "The Agreement on the Establishment of a High Performance Railway Network in South East Europe".

Implementation of the Transport Community Treaty will result in the

creation of an EU-compatible regional transport market that will accelerate progress of the region towards the EU and provide operators and investors in the transport sector with legal certainty, thereby stimulating and speeding up the necessary investment and economic development.

3. European Common Aviation Area (ECAA) Agreement

In the aviation sector, the partners from South East Europe have undertaken an important step towards integration of SEE into the EU Internal Aviation Market by signing an agreement on establishment of European Common Aviation Area (ECAA) in June 2006. Contracting Parties to the ECAA Agreement are the EU and its Member States, Iceland, Norway and the South-East European partners (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro and the United Nations Mission in Kosovo under UNSCR 1244/99).

The agreement is based on gradual market opening, freedom of establishment and non-discrimination, equal conditions of competition, and common rules in all areas of civil aviation (economic regulation, safety, security, air traffic management environmental and social protection, competition, state aid etc). It commits the South-East European partners to implement the EU acquis in air traffic through transitional periods with a view to their full integration into the EU internal air transport market. Considerable progress has been made by all ECAA Partners in this respect but further efforts are still required to implement the acquis.

Air transport is essential for the well-functioning of the economy, especially trade and tourism. The ECAA Agreement presents opportunities and challenges to airlines and other interested parties in the region to take advantage of this liberalized market and improve air connectivity to, from and within the SEE region.

RCC will focus on the activities which will enable the full application and better use of market access provided for in the ECAA Agreement and facilitate the implementation of the aviation acquis.

4. ISIS Programme Secretariat - Brussels

ISIS Programme, managed by the ISIS Programme Secretariat, is an initiative of the European Commission and Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe developed in the framework of extension of the Trans-European networks to SEE and in support to the European Common Aviation Area (ECAA) Agreement. The ISIS Programme was signed on the 22nd of April 2008 in Stockholm by Directors-General of Civil Aviation of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, representative of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo under UNSCR 1244/99, as well as European Commission, Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe and Regional Cooperation Council. The ISIS Programme has been launched with immediate effect.

The re-orientation of the SEE Functional Airspace Block Approach (SEE FAB) towards the ISIS programme aims to support and sustain the extension of Single European Sky to SEE and enhance interconnection of the air navigation network infrastructures and

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services. The support consists of providing knowledge of the Single European Sky (SES) legislation and its requirements to national staff responsible for air traffic management (ATM) issues, and will therefore ultimately facilitate implementation of SES legislation - from transposition of the legislation to establishment of well-functioning structures. ISIS shall also provide a common integrated approach for all ATM-related projects in the region with the ambition to better address the needs of various stakeholders and provide them with coherent and pragmatic support while rationalizing the financial and human resources and ensuring that allocated budgets are adequately used. The main and direct stakeholders will be airline operators, but society as a whole will benefit. To make this possible, it is necessary to establish a Steering Committee consisting of representatives from transport/aviation sector, EC, RCC, SEETO and IFIs.

The RCC retains Stability Pact's seat on the Governing Body of ISIS which is responsible for implementation of decisions of the ISIS Governing Structure. The RCC will continue to be active in Air Traffic Management and civil aviation in general through providing support to projects within the new ISIS Programme by facilitating trainings, workshops and organizing conferences, etc. In that respect, the EC will jointly with the RCC organize a Ministerial Conference in the coming period with the objective of gathering forces towards the implementation of SES.

5. Regional Environmental Network for Accession (RENA)

The RENA programme, supported by MB IPA in the period 2010-2012, which will be

operational soon, will address major regional environmental challenges particularly focusing on the issues that can be better addressed by having a regional rather than national approach. Under this framework, the focus will be on strategic planning and investments, including progress monitoring and compliance check; climate change; cross-border cooperation and multilateral environmental agreements; and Environmental Compliance and Enforcement Network for Accession (ECENA).

Additional environmental activities, performed within the MB IPA framework will complement the ones under RENA. Close RCC Secretariat cooperation with these frameworks is significant to fill the recognized gaps, ensure, as far as possible, that RCC members from SEE are beneficiaries and increase overall efficiency, further prioritize regional needs and address the most urgent ones within the available resources and timeframe. In that respect, the RCC will need to explore its relations with RENA once the latter becomes operational.

6. International Sava River Basin Commission (ISRBC) - Zagreb

ISRBC has been established for the purpose of implementation of the Framework Agreement on the Sava River Basin (FASRB), and realization of mutually-agreed goals: establishment of an international navigation regime on the Sava River and its navigable tributaries; establishment of sustainable water management; and undertaking of measures to prevent or limit hazards, such as floods, ice hazards, droughts and accidents involving substances hazardous to water, as well as reducing or eliminating their adverse consequences.

These goals are realized through the following activities: coordination of development of joint/ integrated plans for the Sava River Basin (SRB), such as the River Basin Management Plan, Flood Risk Management Plan and Contingency Plan; coordination of establishment of integrated systems for the SRB, such as GIS River Information Services (RIS), and Monitoring, Forecasting and Early Warning Systems (for accident prevention and control and flood protection); preparation and realization of development programs and other strategic documents, carrying out and coordination of preparation of studies and projects; harmonization of national with the EU regulation; creation of additional protocols to the FASRB; cooperation and public participation.

The ISRBC budget is financed by contributions of FASRB signatories (Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia and Serbia).

The RCC has established close cooperation with ISRBC primarily in relation to assistance in preparation of project proposals and providing data needed for project development. The advancement of Danube Region Strategy will further increase cooperation between the two organizations.

7. Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) - Szentendre

The REC is an organization active in the field of environmental protection, promoting cooperation among governments, non-governmental organizations, businesses and other environmental stakeholders, and supporting the free exchange of information

and public participation in environmental decision-making. It is a project-oriented organization receiving significant support from the donor community.

The REC was established in 1990 by the United States, European Commission and Hungary. Today, REC is legally based on a charter signed by the governments of 29 countries and European Commission. The REC has its head office in Szentendre, Hungary, and country and field offices in 17 beneficiary countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey. In addition to the abovementioned countries, Austria, Denmark, Finland, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, Germany, Italy and Malta also signed the charter. The REC also has a field office in Kosovo as defined by UNSCR 1244/99.

Jointly with the REC, RCC launched a Framework Programme "Roadmap for Environmental Cooperation in SEE" in 2008. This Programme started with a Ministerial Conference "Combating Climate Change in SEE" which resulted in a Joint Ministerial Statement and adoption of a Climate Change Framework Action Plan for Adaptation. AMoU on cooperation between the two organizations was recently signed. The major goal of cooperation between the two organizations is to complement the existing and planned regional environmental frameworks. Common efforts are needed to raise additional funds for continuing cooperation and delivering expected results.

8. Network of Associations of Local Authorities of SEE (NALAS) - Skopje

NALAS brings together 15 associations from the Western Balkans, Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey, Slovenia and Moldova which represent roughly 4000 local authorities. NALAS Secretariat is responsible for the overall coordination and implementation of activities. NALAS was established in 2001 under the auspices of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe (Working Table 1) and the Council of Europe.

NALAS promotes the process of decentralization in cooperation with central governments and international organizations, considering local self-government as a key issue in the current process of transition. NALAS builds partnerships in order to contribute to reconciliation, stabilization and European integration of the entire region. It focuses primarily on local finances, urban planning, waste management, institutional development and energy efficiency. Task forces on each of these topics develop different projects and concrete activities.

From the start, NALAS received substantial funding from the Swiss Development Centre (SDC). German Technical Assistance (GTZ) contributes predominantly to the many concrete projects developed by NALAS task forces. The Open Society Institute also provided funding.

Recognizing the need to promote a “bottom-up” approach, RCC Secretariat established cooperation with NALAS in the area of infrastructure, expanding this cooperation to other priority areas.

Other

Although they are not regional initiatives of the South East European format, the Danube Commission, based in Budapest (including Austria, Bulgaria, Hungary, Germany, Moldova, Russian Federation, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Ukraine and Croatia) and the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River, based in Vienna (including the Western Balkans, Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Switzerland, Ukraine) are of special importance for coordinated programming of RCC activities in relation to navigation and environmental issues respectively.

Additionally, the RCC Secretariat established communication and cooperation with a variety of other regional cooperation processes, organizations and initiatives.¹

¹ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, Central European Initiative, Black Sea Economic Cooperation, Adriatic Ionian Initiative, Black Sea Regional Energy Center, Institute for Energy of SEE, World Energy Council SEE Task Force on Energy, European Foundation for the Sustainable Development of the Regions, Regional Center for Efficient Use of Energy and Water Resources, Danube Cooperation Process, Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme, Priority Environmental Investment Programme, Environment and Security Initiative, Environmental Compliance and Enforcement Network for Accession, EnEffect, Regional Education and Information Centre for Sustainable Development, Center on Energy Efficiency of BiH.

3. Justice and Home Affairs

There are four regional initiatives and organisations established by the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe (SPSEE): Migration, Asylum and Refugees Regional Initiative (MARRI), Regional Anticorruption Initiative (RAI), Southeast European Cooperative Initiative - Regional Centre for Combating Trans-border Crime (SECI Centre) and Southeast European Prosecutors Advisory Group (SEEPAG). These are fully supported by the RCC Secretariat, together with a subject of private international law, the Southeast Europe Police Chiefs Association (SEPCA), established in 2002 by police directors. There are two regional structures which are not directly connected to the RCC: The Police Cooperation Convention for Southeast Europe Secretariat (PCC-SEE Secretariat), originating from the 2006 multilateral Police Cooperation Convention, and the Western Balkans Prosecutors' Network, established in 2005 with EU support. Regional organisations have created effective operational mechanisms in fighting trans-border organized crime, common policies and proceedings on police and law enforcement cooperation, implementation of projects on anticorruption and combating illegal migration.

1. Migration, Asylum and Refugee Regional Initiative (MARRI) - Skopje

MARRI is an intergovernmental organisation established in 2004 by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs from six Western Balkans countries. It is financed by members' contributions and donors. The focus of the organisation is migration management, integrated approach to illegal and legal migration, asylum, border management, visa policies and consular cooperation as well as refugee return. Relations with the RCC are based on 2009 MoU, entrusting RCC to provide political support, facilitate project design and ensure regional coordination with other initiatives. Several actions have been co-organised by MARRI and RCC, such as the 2009 Meeting of the Heads of Consular Sections from SEEC countries.

Members: (6) - Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia have their representatives in MARRI Centre, which acts as a hub for consultations, dialogue, training, capacity building, information exchange and other regional activities.

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Key partners: Europol, Frontex, ICMPD, IOM, SDC, UNHCR, USAID, SEPCA, SECI Center, RCC Secretariat.

2. Regional Anticorruption Initiative (RAI) – Sarajevo

RAI is an intergovernmental organisation established in 2000 by Ministers of Justice and it currently counts nine members. Its activities are financed by its members and the US State Department through RCC Secretariat. RAI serves as a regional platform through which governments, civil society organisations, aid agencies and international organisations combine their efforts to curb corruption in SEE. RCC provides political support to RAI, as well as acting as facilitator of project implementation, advisor and regional coordinator. A MoU between the two parties was signed in 2009 and a Survey on Justice System Integrity, financed by US State Department, is conducted by RCC, RAI and TI Romania. Through the RCC Secretariat, RAI entered in a strategic partnership with UNODC. In particular, RAI plays an advisory role as an associate in the framework of two EU-funded projects implemented by UNODC: *Development of monitoring instruments for judicial and law enforcement institutions in the Western Balkans* and *Assessment of corruption and crime in the Western Balkans*.

Members: (9) – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia and one observer – UNMIK.

Key partners: Council of Europe, ABA ROLI, UNODC, OSCE, OECD, USAID, UNDP, UNODC, TI, SECI Centre, SEPCA and RCC.

3. Southeast European Cooperative Initiative - Regional Centre for Combating Trans-border Crime (SECI Centre - in future Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre (SELEC), Bucharest

SECI Centre/SELEC is a law enforcement organisation bringing together police and customs authorities. It is an intergovernmental organisation established under the Agreement and Charter signed in 1999. It is financed by members and USA grants. In December 2009 in Bucharest, the Convention on Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre was signed and SECI will become SELEC after ratification of the Convention by the parliaments of 9 of its members. SECI/SELEC has thirteen member countries and twenty-three observers. Interpol and the World Customs Organisation are permanent (non-resident) advisors to the Centre. An EU-funded project is planned to start in the third quarter of 2010. The aim of the action, which will be implemented by a consortium of EU Member States, is to strengthen the capacity of SECI/SELEC to combat trans-border crime (no direct financial support to SECI/SELEC will be provided). Close links and productive cooperation between the Police Cooperation Convention Secretariat and SELEC should be established. The RCC Secretariat ensures political support, facilitates project implementation and coordination with other regional organisations. In 2009, a MoU was signed between SECI Centre and RCC.

Members: (13) countries - Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Croatia,

Montenegro, Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Romania, Slovenia, Turkey and Moldova; there are 23 observers - Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, EUBAM, France, Georgia, Germany, Israel, Italia, Japan, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Slovakia, Ukraine, UNDP Romania, the UK, UNMIK and USA. Interpol and World Customs Organisation are permanent (non-resident) advisors to the SECI Centre.

Key partners: EU Commission, Europol, Interpol, WCO, OSCE, UNODC, SEPCA, MARRI, RAI, PCC Secretariat, SEEPAG and RCC.

4. Southeast European Prosecutors Advisory Group (SEEPAG) - Bucharest

SEEPAG is a network of Prosecutorial Contact Points (PPF) functioning under the 2003 Declaration and 2005 General Guidelines signed by General Prosecutors from 12 countries, financed mainly by USA through SECI Centre. SEEPAG serves as a regional operational network that facilitates prosecutors' cooperation and mutual legal assistance. RCC Secretariat supports the increase of SEEPAG competences, as a network of prosecutors able to provide real operational support, legal assistance, advice and guidance to SECI Centre liaisons officers in the investigation of trans-border organised crime. Greater coordination has to be achieved between SEEPAG and the Prosecutors' Network of the Western Balkans.

Members: (12) - Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia and Turkey.

Key partners: US-Department of Justice, EUROJUST, EJM, UNODC, SECI Center and RCC.

5. Southeast Europe Police Chiefs Association (SEPCA) - Sofia

SEPCA is an organisation of police directors, functioning on the Statute signed in 2007 by 10 police services from 9 states. Its budget is composed of members' contributions and donations from SDC, DCAF and Liechtenstein. SEPCA's main objective is to build public security through cooperation of police services, together with citizens and its partner organisations. The Association promotes police transformation into an effective and democratic police service for the benefit of the entire population. Based on the MoU concluded in 2009, RCC coordinates SEPCA's cooperation with other regional initiatives, organises common activities (such as the Bled Conference on Stolen Vehicles) and promotes SEPCA as a driving force in the field of police reforms.

Members: 10 police services from 9 states - Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina-Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosnia and Herzegovina-Republika Srpska, Bulgaria, Croatia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia.

Key partners: Liechtenstein, EU Commission, SECI Centre, Interpol, Europol, OSCE-SPMU, SDC, DCAF, MARRI, RACVIAC, SEESAC and RCC.

6. Women Police Officer Network (WPON) - to be established

WPON is emerging from a SEPCA project as an independent network of female police officers from 9 states that will work together on networking, career-building and gender equality, raising awareness on the status of women in police nationally, supporting developments on national and regional level, conducting relevant research and implementing specialised projects. RCC supported the initiative and MoU between the two parties is foreseen.

Members: 10 police services from 9 states -Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina-Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosnia and Herzegovina-Republika Srpska, Bulgaria, Croatia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia.

Key partners: IAWP, OSCE, UNIFEM and RCC.

7. Secretariat of Police Cooperation Convention for Southeast Europe (PCC-SEE Secretariat) - Ljubljana

The PCC-SEE Secretariat is organizing and monitoring implementation of the treaty-based procedural mechanism on police cooperation in South East Europe adopted by eight countries. The Secretariat is operational since September 2008, hosted by DCAF Ljubljana, and financed by Austria, Slovenia, Liechtenstein, Switzerland and DCAF. It prepares draft agreements and guidelines as well as lobbying for political decisions. Through its work and presence in regional meetings of ministries of

interior, the RCC identified and presented the links between procedural provisions of the Convention, SECI/SELEC Centre activities and set up of international law enforcement units in the framework of the EU-funded ILECU project. The RCC supports and promotes the PCC-SEE concept. The RCC and its partners have begun to explore institutional, financial and legal means to confer regional ownership to the Secretariat.

Members: (8) - Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia.

Key partners: DCAF, EU, Austria, Slovenia, SECI Centre, SEPCA and RCC Secretariat.

8. Western Balkans Prosecutors' Network

The Prosecutors' Network of the Western Balkans is a professional network of public prosecutors from 6 countries established in 2005 upon conclusion of the MoU signed by Chief Prosecutors. The Network was reinforced and its scope widened with an amended MoU signed in 2010. The Network functions on the basis of direct contacts between 6 National Contact Points which also serve as judicial contact points in the international law enforcement coordination units - ILECU. The network is supported by the EU and the Council of Europe. It aims at cooperating closely in repressing, investigating and prosecuting perpetrators of organised crime and all other forms of serious crime, criminal groups and criminal associations. A greater coordination between the Prosecutors' Network and SEEPAG shall be pursued. An assessment shall be carried out with

the aim to identify possible solutions to streamline and ensure better cooperation of the two networks.

Members: (6) - Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

Key partners: EU, Council of Europe, UNODC.

4. Security Cooperation

There are six initiatives in the domain of Security Cooperation with which the RCC cooperates. Each includes several SEECF participating states as well as countries outside the SEECF area, depending on the format of initiative and region covered. These have developed relevant security cooperation projects and mechanisms.

1. Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative (DPPI SEE) - Sarajevo

Its members are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (under its constitutional name), Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Slovenia, Serbia and Turkey. The task of Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative (DPPI SEE) is to contribute to the development of a cohesive regional strategy for disaster preparedness and prevention. It is a regional initiative that seeks to provide a framework for SEE nations to develop programmes and projects leading to strengthened capabilities to prevent and respond to natural and man-made, i.e. technological disasters. The initiative brings together donor countries and national and international non-governmental and governmental organisations to coordinate ongoing and future activities and identify

unmet needs in order to improve efficiency of national disaster management. The overarching goal of DPPI SEE is to foster regional cooperation and coordination in disaster preparedness and prevention.

The DPPI SEE is currently in a transition period and, as such, has a structure that still relies on donor community. Transfer of the DPPI SEE to regional ownership will require sufficient progress on legal and procedural instruments (intra-regional and inter-country agreements on procedures, standards and disaster management concepts); preparation for transforming DPPI SEE Secretariat into a legal entity; assuming full political responsibility by participating states in compliance with the developed Strategy and Bi-annual Action Plan.

RCC is a member of the DPPI Regional Meeting and the DPPI Chair in Office (CiO) reports to the RCC.

Activities under the EU Prevention, Preparedness and Response to Disasters-South programme covering the Euro-Mediterranean area are open to EU candidate and potential candidate countries. The EU-funded regional Disaster Risk Reduction Initiative is currently implemented by UNDP and

World Meteorological Organisation (WMO). The World Bank and United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) are also active in the field of civil protection and disaster risk reduction in the region.

2. South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC)

SEESAC is a joint project between the Regional Cooperation Council and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), assisting SEE governments with implementation of the 2001 Regional Plan for Combating the Proliferation and Impact of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW).

SEESAC's mandate provides for the implementation of holistic SALW control programmes with an emphasis on Cross Border Control, Legislative and Regulatory Issues, Management Information, SALW Survey, SALW Awareness and Communications Strategy, SALW Collection Programmes, SALW Destruction Programmes, SALW Stockpile Management Issues.

SEESAC has made substantial progress in working with governments in SEE on establishing national strategies on SALW control and implementation of specific project activities, which address the supply and demand side of SALW control.

3. South East Europe Defence Ministerial (SEDM)

Initiated in 1996, the South-Eastern Europe Defence Ministerial (SEDM) represents a

process of cooperation among the Ministries of Defence of South East European countries. Members of SEDM are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Turkey, Ukraine, and USA, and Georgia and Moldova with the status of observers.

The main objective of SEDM process is to strengthen understanding and political-military cooperation in the region in order to enhance stability and security in SEE. SEDM objectives inter alia are "promotion of mutual understanding, confidence and cooperation among member countries; contribution of SEDM and Multinational Peace Force of the SEE (MPFSEE) / South-Eastern Europe Brigade (SEEBRIG) to regional and worldwide security and stability; enhancement of the SEEBRIG interoperability and capability to deploy in peace support missions; facilitation of SEEBRIG employment in peace support operations; promotion of Euro - Atlantic integration processes of SEDM member nations; implementation and development of the SEDM projects".

4. The United States-Adriatic Charter

Partners in this regional initiative are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (under its constitutional name), Montenegro, and the United States. Although there is no formal mechanism to include official observers, other countries, such as Serbia and Slovenia, have attended Adriatic Charter events on occasion. The initiative's founding document was signed in 2003 in Washington under the aegis

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of the United States. The Charter, as a diplomatic project, has two objectives: to secure an open-door NATO policy and provide a framework for cooperation and mutual support to NATO candidate countries. The "A5" rotates the chair in six-month period to every partner country except the United States. During these six months, the chair organises various activities which always include a Foreign Affairs Ministerial and Chiefs of Defence (CHODs) meeting and other events as set by the country chair. As a rule, the Defence Ministerial is held only once a year, usually in November. In the most recent defence ministerial statement, Adriatic Charter nations reaffirmed their key objective of fostering regional cooperation, stability and integration of the partner states in Euro-Atlantic structures. Partner states declared that Adriatic Charter activities and projects should be coordinated and synchronized with other regional initiatives, such as SEDM (South East Europe Defence Ministerial), SEEC (South Eastern Europe Clearinghouse), RCC (Regional Cooperation Council), etc., in order to avoid duplication of efforts and resources.

5. South Eastern Europe Clearinghouse - SEEC

The Initiative was established by EUCOM, Slovenia, NATO aspirants, which at that moment were Republic of Albania, Republic of Croatia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and PfP aspirants Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro on 1 December 2004.

The aim of SEEC is to coordinate efforts of allied and friendly nations offering assistance to NATO candidates and PfP aspiring countries in the region thereby

avoiding duplication, optimizing limited resources and synchronizing efforts, while achieving shared goals.

SEEC provides a multinational defence forum for discussing and exchanging information on bilateral and multilateral security cooperation programmes with NATO and PfP aspirant nations. At the last SEEC meeting in 2009, member countries agreed to establish three regional centres with the highest level of common interest to be developed and used by all countries in the region, i.e. - Peace Support Operations Training Centre in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Media Training Centre in Skopje, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Nuclear, Biological, Chemical Defence Centre in Kruševac, Republic of Serbia.

6. Centre for Security Cooperation (RACVIAC) - Rakitje (Croatia)

Centre for Security Cooperation (RACVIAC) is the legal successor of the Regional Arms Control Verification and Assistance Center and is an international, independent, non-profit, regionally- owned, academic organisation, accountable to its political decision making body, the Multinational Advisory Group (MAG). RACVIAC is financially supported by SEEC participating states represented in MAG, as well as Associate countries.

The mission of RACVIAC is to foster dialogue and cooperation on security matters in South East Europe through partnership between the countries of the region and their international partners by "transforming thinking on national, regional and international security cooperation issues; exposing participants

to the benefit of cooperative approaches to security issues, primarily through conferences, courses, seminars and meetings at RACVIAC, as well as through language training and other applicable supportive programmes". RACVIAC's goal is to become the premier platform for dialogue on security cooperation in South East Europe. The RCC is invited to MAG meetings as an observer.

The new Agreement on RACVIAC was signed by Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Greece, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey on the 14-th of April 2010 and according to Art 27 /1 "shall be subject to ratification, acceptance or approval by the signatory States, in accordance with their respective legal requirements" and in 27/3 "The Agreement shall enter in force on the first day of the month following the date on which the fifth of States ...has deposited its instrument of ratification ...". When the new Agreement on RACVIAC enters into force, the relations between RCC and RACVIAC will be clarified by a MoU in accordance with RACVIAC Strategy 4.6. To be ready to assist RCC activities".

5. Building Human Capital

Within its activities in BHC area, the RCC cooperates closely with two Task Forces functioning under the RCC's umbrella. *The RCC Task Force Fostering and Building Human Capital (TF FBHC)* provides the framework within which to assess the need and importance of BHC in changing societies, stress the need to link education, research and policy making, and promote regional cooperation in the field of human capital development. Communication and cooperation between the RCC and TF FBHC will be further improved, also by greater involvement of TF FBHC in realization of specific project activities developed from the RCC's strategic documents. The RCC Gender Task Force argues for women's political participation and representation as a prerequisite for developing stable, prosperous and democratic societies in South East Europe. The RCC will continue to promote regional ownership and cooperation in this field by building on the existing institutional frameworks and expertise.

There are two relevant regional initiatives with which the RCC will strengthen cooperation. *Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE)* is a regional platform for cooperation in the field of education and training. It aims to support national reforms in education and training

through regional capacity-building, transfer of know-how and linking these efforts to European frameworks for education development. The RCC is a member of ERI SEE Consultative Body, but not a member of the Governing Board. After the envisaged structural and legal re-shaping, ERI SEE should aim at realization of concrete regional programmes and projects of joint interest for ERI SEE members. *Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA)* aims to help improve regional cooperation in the field of public administration, strengthen administrative capacities as required by the European integration process and develop human resources in line with the principles of European Administrative Space. The RCC is not a member of ReSPA Steering Committee. Improved communication and exchange of information on the activities of mutual interest would strengthen future cooperation between the two organizations, thus streamlining regional efforts in strengthening national administrative capacities and avoiding overlaps.

1. RCC Task Force Fostering and Building Human Capital (TF FBHC) - Vienna, Zagreb, Bucharest

To meet the challenge of coordinating the cross-sectoral set of agendas, RCC agreed

to launch a new TF FBHC, established in June 2008, which was put in charge of facilitating dialogue and cooperation in this priority area and of promoting coherency and coordination between the relevant areas and stakeholders. In accordance with its mandate, the TF FBHC regularly formulates recommendations to the RCC Board. The TF FBHC closely cooperates with the RCC Secretariat, in particular through Building Human Capital Unit and in the framework of regular Task Force meetings. The RCC assists TF FBHC and facilitates its work in accordance with the Joint Declaration on establishment of the RCC and RCC Statute.

The aim of the Task Force Fostering and Building Human Capital is to promote coherence and coordination between education, research and science by creating a platform for dialogue and cooperation of actors involved in these sectors. The subsequent goal is to maximize the benefits of investment in human capital development through its contribution to sustainable economic and social development by ensuring coherence with other actions promoted at regional and national level.

The mandate of the Task Force includes in particular the following:

- Raising awareness on the importance of education, higher education and research
- Agenda setting in these policy areas and respective lobbying activities
- Promotion of regular dialogue, information exchange and coordination of activities among the areas of education, higher education, research and science in the SEECP region

- Coordination with other priority areas of the RCC as contribution to a coherent and sustainable approach to regional cooperation in South East Europe by all actors involved

Membership of the Task Force comprises of Members of the RCC Board, Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council, Signatories of the 2007 Istanbul Memorandum of Understanding, Members of Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe and Members of the Steering Platform on Research for the Western Balkan countries.

Among TF FBHC activities held an international conference on Fostering and Building Human Capital for Sustainable Knowledge Societies in SEE took place in Bucharest in March 2009, which was attended by more than 200 decision-makers and representatives from numerous European institutions. Additionally, at the Second Meeting of TF FBHC in Zagreb in June 2009, the Zagreb Plan of Action 2009-2010 was adopted, which is the basis for the current work of the Task Force. The Task Force has also established a Capacity Building Programme for Regional Cooperation through which short-term placements of middle-level civil servants are organized at relevant institutions in the region and which contributes to sustainable development of capacities and know-how.

2. Council of Ministers of Culture of South-East Europe (CoMoCoSEE)

It was created in 2005 and contributes to regional cultural co-operation. It developed, inter alia, the Regional Programme for

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Culture and Cultural Heritage in South-East Europe, which included a joint action by the Council of Europe and the European Commission on the rehabilitation of cultural sites in SEE. The Programme has been developed through the implementation of several integrated projects managed by specific regional political and professional networks. In that context, the Integrated Rehabilitation Project Plans/Survey of Architectural and Archaeological Heritage - IRPP/SAAH made a significant impact in the region. Through the "Ljubljana Process", a series of concrete actions was undertaken for the rehabilitation of selected projects. The EU is a major contributor to this process, mainly through the use of IPA funds.

3. RCC Gender Task Force (GTF)

The Gender Task Force (GTF) is a South East European regional initiative taken by the RCC from the Stability Pact for SEE. In all countries in transition women's political participation is noticeably low. Equal and active role of women in political, social and public life is of significant importance for the region's stabilization and democratization processes.

Years of systematic work of GTF on the political empowerment of women in SEE countries have brought important new experiences:

- women cooperating across party lines, and across ethnic and state borders;
- cooperation among NGO's, parliaments and governments;
- women monitoring elections from a gender perspective;
- grass-roots and mass media campaigning, consensus-building, advocacy & social dialogue.

4. Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE) - Zagreb

ERI SEE is based on a Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Ministers of Education, Science and Research of South Eastern Europe. Its institutional structure consists of a Governing Board, Consultative Body and Secretariat (Agency). Currently, members of the ERI SEE Governing Board are signatory Ministries of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, UNMIK/Kosovo, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia and Romania, as well as the Task Force Fostering and Building Human Capital of the RCC.

Institutional partners like the RCC, Council of Europe (CoE), European Training Foundation (ETF), European University Association (EUA), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), as well as donor countries: Austria, the Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland are represented in the ERI SEE Consultative Body.

Thematic areas of ERI SEE's work currently focus on areas of relevance for the increased role of education and training in the development of SEE countries, objectives of the Work Programme 'Education and Training 2010' and education objectives of the Millennium Development Goals, such as:

- Lifelong learning;
- European Qualification Framework and national qualification frameworks in SEE;
- Quality Education and Equity in Education;

- 'Knowledge triangle' - education, research and innovation.

The 11th meeting of ERI SEE Governing Body and Consultative Body, held on 16 - 17 November 2009 in Zagreb, was supposed to decide upon the most important issues regarding future activities of ERI SEE, including its yearly Plan of Action, Budget, appointment of the new director of ERI SEE Agency, as well as to determine the optimal module of legal re-establishment of ERI SEE. No decision was taken due to the lack of quorum. Since this was the third consecutive meeting of ERI SEE Steering Board which did not have the quorum, it is evident that serious consultations among the beneficiaries and donors have to be conducted on the need and eventual module for future functioning of the Initiative. Current host country of the ERI SEE Agency, Croatia, has hosted ERI SEE since 2005. Since its inception, the ERI SEE Secretariat was established with the rotating seat principle. Currently, the process of identifying a new host country is under way. It is of crucial importance for future existence of the Initiative that one of the countries from the region takes over the host country role. It should be also taken into account that the legal personality of future ERI SEE Agency should be established in compliance with standard procedures on establishment of international organizations. Future activities of the Initiative should aim at realization of concrete regional programmes and projects of joint interest for ERI SEE members.

5. Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) - Danilovgrad

The initial concept of ReSPA was developed with the objective to boost

regional cooperation in the field of public administration, strengthening administrative capacity and developing human resources in line with the principles of the European Administrative Space. Within the SAP perspective, ReSPA is one of the mechanisms through which countries and entities have agreed to develop regional cooperation in the perspective of eventually, joining the European Union (EU). This initiative is supported by the European Commission (EC). The ultimate goal is to help the participating countries and entities meet the relevant Copenhagen and Madrid criteria for EU membership. By helping to improve public administration, the School will have an indirect influence on enhancing the rule of law and transparency.

Knowledge and experience gained will be shared through different electronic and more conventional media. Gradually, ReSPA will not only become a training provider, but also a nucleus of a network of existing schools of public administration in the region and play an advisory role in improving the performance of national administrations.

Having in mind the importance of regional cooperation in the domain of public administration reform, further deepening of relations with the Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) is of great importance to the RCC. So far, 4 of the Signatories of ReSPA Agreement have ratified this document (Croatia, Serbia and UNMIK/ Kosovo did not). For the Agreement to come into force, it is necessary that 5 out of the 7 parties conclude the ratification process. This would enable full operationalisation of ReSPA, as well as appointment of the Director and staff of ReSPA Secretariat. Improved communication and exchange

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of information on the activities of mutual interest would strengthen future cooperation between the two organizations, therefore streamlining regional efforts in strengthening national administrative capacities and avoiding overlaps.

6. South East European Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning (SEECEL) - Zagreb

In the course of 2007-2008, the National Coordinators of the Charter of Small Enterprises from SEE countries took an initiative to establish structured cooperation amongst the SEE countries/ pre-accession countries on lifelong entrepreneurial learning and agreed on the establishment of SEECEL. Following the completion of the preparatory phase (during which the Croatian Chamber of Economy acted as a temporary host institution), SEECEL was established in July 2009 as an independent institution under national legislation of the host country.

SEECEL's activities centre on a number of common areas identified through the 2008 assessment of each country's performance regarding the human capital areas of the European Charter for Small Enterprise. The mission of SEECEL is to support all participating countries in the alignment of policies and practice in lifelong entrepreneurial learning with those of the European Union (EU) as well as to identify other global models that may enhance the role of entrepreneurial learning in the context of knowledge-driven, small enterprise-dominated and highly competitive economies.

SEECEL's 2009-2012 work programme is financially supported by the EU, through

the - IPA Multi-beneficiary Programme, and the Ministry of Economy, Labour and Entrepreneurship of the Republic of Croatia.

As a member of SEECEL Steering Committee, the RCC expressed its firm support to the working programme of SEECEL, re-emphasising the importance of regional cooperation in respective areas. Furthermore, the RCC suggested that establishment of SEECEL in the next phase as a regional organisation (in accordance with the respective international documents and regulations) would be of particular importance for efficient and sustainable work of the Centre.

7. Novi Sad Initiative

Novi Sad Initiative is devoted to institutional reform and cooperation in higher education, bringing together a range of institutions with responsibility in higher education from the Western Balkans, including universities, higher education authorities, regional and European organisations and independent experts. It aims to develop cooperation in the field of higher education, in line with the goals and policies of the EHEA, and in close cooperation with the Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe. The RCC co-organized and chaired the Sarajevo Conference on higher education in October 2009 and will chair the Steering Group for guiding and monitoring progress of higher education structural reform under the umbrella of the Novi Sad Initiative. Planned activities will include sharing experience within the region concerning higher education reform, benchmarking with the best EU practice, strengthening capacity of administrators

and policy makers, and direct involvement of all relevant parties in the region, in finding feasible joint solutions for current challenges in higher education reform. Planned activities will also include sharing experiences on qualification frameworks and qualification system development; identification of common qualifications; promotion of cooperation with the EU Member States and shared standards in the region. Activities will be realised in coordination with other regional and European initiatives such as the Regional Qualification Network for South-East Europe, EHEA Qualification Network and networks of the European Network of Information Centres (ENIC) and National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC). It will lead to improving transparency of qualifications which would allow for better mobility of students and academics within the region.

6. Parliamentary Cooperation

The RCC Secretariat has not only forged cooperation with the regionally-led initiatives, networks and International Organizations which were inclined to assist in the area of parliamentary cooperation but also with individual parliaments in the region as well. There are three regional initiatives which have been established since the Stability Pact for SEE: The Regional Secretariat for Parliamentary Cooperation in SEE (RSPC SEE) in Bulgaria, the Cetinje Parliamentary Forum (CPF) in Montenegro and the Conference of the European Integration Parliamentary Committees of States participating in the Stabilisation and Association Process (COSAP). From the three regionally-led initiatives mentioned, COSAP is the most active and autonomous network vis-a-vis RCC. Closer and more active cooperation was established with the Regional Secretariat for Parliamentary Cooperation in South Eastern Europe and the Cetinje Parliamentary Forum, whereby RCC input was required to a greater extent.

Good cooperation was fashioned also with the European Parliament, whereby the RCC has facilitated the EP on targeting key experts on regional thematic issues and also offered the participation of RCC experts on various thematic meetings involving either MPs or parliamentary staff from the Parliaments of the Western Balkans.

1. Regional Secretariat for Parliamentary Cooperation in South Eastern Europe (RSPC SEE) - Sofia

The RSPC SEE Secretariat has been functioning since 2008 following the decision to reach a more effective, co-ordinated and much more institutionalised sustainable co-operation structure between the parliaments of the region. Regional Secretariat for Parliamentary Cooperation in SEE has been established after the endorsement of the meeting of SEECF Speakers of the Parliament in 2008, signing of the MoU, and the decision to locate it in the premises of the National Assembly of Bulgaria. The role of the Regional Secretariat was intended to be a focal point which would coordinate all regional parliamentary cooperation activities among SEECF participating countries. The Bulgarian parliament has provided office space and appointed 2 persons to work in the secretariat, while the current and future Chairs of SEECF did not fulfill the agreement to second their representatives to the Secretariat, as was agreed at the meetings of the Speakers of parliaments in 2008.

Programming of activities proved difficult and very rigid since all agreements have

to formally go through yearly meetings of SEECP Speakers of Parliament. So far one such meeting (in Sofia) was held since the Secretariat was established. The meeting of SEECP Speakers of Parliament in 2009 was cancelled due to political turmoil in Moldova. The understaffed RSPC SEE, the delay of SEECP Speakers of Parliaments meeting in 2009, and several election cycles in the countries of SEE in the past two years have contributed to the lack of concerted activities on parliamentary cooperation. The next SEECP Speakers of Parliaments meeting under Turkish SEECP CiO is scheduled for June 2010. At this meeting, guidelines and procedures for the RSPC SEE are expected to be endorsed.

Needs of Parliaments from Western Balkans countries differs in a sense of urgency and substance (EU perspective) from other members of SEECP (all of the rest already MS of the EU, Moldova covered under ENP) which all belong to the same RSPC SEE umbrella. Plans of activities delivered in cooperation with the European Parliament/ DG Relations with National Parliaments, are mostly related to the SAP and involve only Parliaments from WB countries, which causes criticism from other countries belonging to RSPC SEE.

2. Conference of the European Integration Parliamentary Committees of States participating in the Stabilization and Association Process (Western Balkans COSAP)

The Western Balkans COSAP was created in Sarajevo on 16-18 June 2005 as a result of the Thessaloniki Summit held in 2003, whereby all WB countries were granted

membership perspective once they individually meet the accession criteria. According to the Western Balkans COSAP Rules of Procedure, adopted at its first meeting held in Sarajevo in 2005, the Conference has a rotating Chairmanship, held in alphabetical order by the Chairman of the Committee for European Affairs of the presiding country, and meets at least twice a year to discuss issues related to the Stabilization and Association Process and to EU enlargement. The meetings, multilateral in nature, are usually scheduled taking into consideration also the COSAC meetings calendar and are organized and hosted by the presiding country. A troika composed by the Chairs of Committees for European Affairs/ integration of the previous, current and future presidency ensures coordination of activities. Five meetings were held so far since its creation with only 2007 and 2008 COSAP was dormant.

The Western Balkans COSAP has a clear agenda and a perspective, it aims at strengthening cooperation between the Committees of National Parliaments dealing with European Affairs (which is not a novelty in the European Union itself as indeed member Parliaments and the European Parliament gather twice a year in a framework called COSAC).

The RCC has taken part in all COSAP activities and has followed its work. This is one of the successfully established networks which is functional, has a clear agenda and operates as a strong network between parliamentary committees dealing with EU affairs in WB countries and with significant help from European Parliament.

3. Cetinje Parliamentary Forum

The Cetinje Parliamentary Forum is an initiative undertaken by the Parliament of Montenegro since 2004 to encourage and promote Parliamentary dialogue and cooperation between the countries of the region. The Cetinje Parliamentary Forum offers the possibility to share experiences and best practices and to rationalize Parliamentary work, especially in relation to the implementation of EU standards into national legislation and in other issues of common regional interest. To this end, and in order to promote a closer and more focused dialogue, the Cetinje Parliamentary Forum organizes meetings, which gather together representatives of Parliaments at different levels: Speakers of Parliaments and/or Deputy Speakers; Presidents/chairmen of Parliamentary Committees; Members of Parliaments; Secretaries of Parliaments; Secretaries of Parliamentary Committees and expert associates.

The Forum hosts also the meetings of the Parliamentary dimension of the Adriatic-Ionian initiative. So far the Forum has organized six meetings, two for the Speakers of the Parliaments and four for the Speakers of the Parliaments and specific Committees. The first and founding meeting took place on 8 and 9 February 2004 and gathered together Speakers and Deputy Speakers of the Parliaments of participant countries. The 8th meeting of Cetinje held this year on 24 April was held back to back with COSAP meeting in Cetinje.

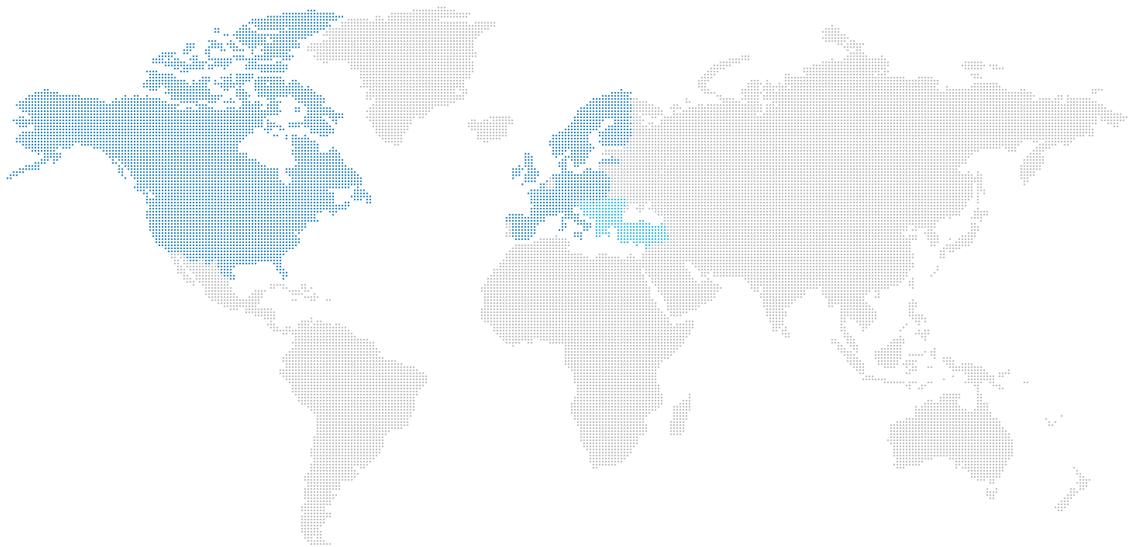
While COSAP is held only on the level of Parliamentary Committees dealing with European Affairs, Cetinje Parliamentary Forum has a wider scope of activities

tackling other parliamentary committees as well. Cetinje Parliamentary Forum has also premises and infrastructure in Cetinje, the traditional capital of Montenegro. The RCC Secretariat is venturing the idea in consultations with the Montenegrin National Assembly and upcoming Montenegrin SEECF CiO (from June 2010) in striving to build consensus with other parliaments of the region to undertake the institutionalization of Cetinje Parliamentary Forum. Creation of CPF as an operational hub would provide significant impetus for strengthening existing mechanism for cooperation in the WB in the parliamentary dimension, in particular in the area of European and Euro-Atlantic integration.

RCC members

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The Regional Cooperation Council promotes 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.



Regional Cooperation Council

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