



**STRATEGIC WORK
PROGRAMME OF THE
REGIONAL
COOPERATION COUNCIL**

2008 – 2009

POMORIE, 20 MAY 2008

1. STRATEGIC WORK PROGRAMME 2008 - 2009

1.1. General aspects

The Working Programme of the Regional Cooperation Council Secretariat for the period ahead will be based upon the Agenda of the SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office by the Republic of Moldova as endorsed by the SEECP Meeting of the Heads of State and Government in Pomorie, Bulgaria, 21 May 2008.

This Agenda envisages key priorities for further economic and social progress in South East Europe, further promotion of democratic values and reforms, support for the realisation of European perspective for the participating states including the consolidation of the institutional dialogue with the EU institutions, promotion of the role of the SEECP as a reliable partner on international arena and adjustment of functional competencies of the SEECP, taking into account the commencement of the activities of the RCC. The Agenda of the forthcoming Chairmanship-in-Office of the SEECP by the Republic of Moldova envisages as well the strengthening of cooperation with the RCC Secretariat, in particular in relation to the priority areas of both RCC and the SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office. Of particular importance is the intention to contribute to the consolidation and greater efficiency of regional processes and initiatives in joint cooperation of the SEECP, RCC, EU and relevant international financial institutions.

These priorities also reflect a full continuity with the priorities endorsed and implemented during the period of Bulgarian and previous Croatian Chairmanship-in-Office of the SEECP.

This fact strongly underlines that energy and infrastructure, economic and social development, justice and home affairs, security and building human capital are genuine areas of utmost interest and necessary focus of the SEECP.

As an operational arm of the SEECP the RCC Secretariat will fully devote its activities to these areas. The inner working structure of the RCC Secretariat, as approved by the SEECP Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Plovdiv, reflects these areas in a way that will ensure full operational capacity.

In parallel, the RCC Secretariat will profile itself as a key interlocutor of the EU in South East Europe in preparing programmes and initiatives of strategic importance for the economic and social advancement of the region.

The synergy between the SEECP Agenda, strategies and programmes of individual Governments of the SEECP Participating States in the priority areas and planned EU activities and programmes in these domains will constitute a basis of the Work Programme of the RCC Secretariat.

In addition, RCC Secretariat welcomes the adoption of its Strategic Work Programme for the period 2008 – 2009 by the RCC Board, in accordance with Article 10 of the Statute of the RCC, and its endorsement by the SEECP Heads of State and Government in Pomorie, 21 May 2008. The Secretary General of the RCC will regularly inform the members of the RCC Board on the implementation of the Strategic Work Programme on the occasion of the regular quarterly RCC Board meetings, pursuant to Article 10 of the Statute of the RCC. Detailed report on the implementation of the Strategic Work Programme shall form part of the Annual Report of the Secretary General of the RCC, to be submitted for adoption by the RCC Board and the endorsement by the RCC Annual Meeting in accordance with Articles 9 and 10 of the Statute of the RCC.

1.2. Framework and Road Map

Concrete tasks that remain ahead of the RCC and its Secretariat in the near future are the following:

1.2.1

To fully complete the process of taking over from the Stability Pact and start operating actively and independently (May – June 2008).

1.2.2.

To complete all the administrative tasks related to the formation and setting-up of the RCC Secretariat (June 2008).

1.2.3.

To activate the Liaison Office in Brussels and sign the Headquarters Agreement with Belgium (June 2008).

1.2.4.

To activate the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for the Relations with the Presidency of the Council of the EU and, through the activities of the Secretary General, to ensure cooperation with present and future Presidencies of the EU Council (June 2008).

1.2.5.

To start implementing the RCC Communication Strategy (June 2008).

1.2.6.

To pursue active cooperation with the European Commission on the identification of priorities for the Multi-beneficiary IPA Programme (June – September 2008).

1.2.7.

To review strategies and programmes of the Governments of the SEECP Participating States in the field of the SEECP Agenda and provide support in the process of aligning them with the Multi-beneficiary IPA Programme in order to elaborate a framework for the coordination and follow-up of the most important projects.

1.2.8.

To propose that National Coordinators in the SEECP Participating States become actual focal points for cooperation with Governments and actively coordinate projects and programmes of line ministries. With regard to that, regular meetings of all the RCC National Coordinators, or their representatives, are foreseen in the RCC Secretariat, both within the frame of the quarterly RCC Board meetings as well in a separate topical frame.

1.2.9.

To prepare a framework for the future permanent networking between the representatives of relevant services of the European Commission, RCC National Coordinators and experts in the RCC Secretariat with regard to the identified regional priorities.

1.2.10.

In consultation with the Government of the Republic of Moldova, to actively assist the SEECP Chairmanship-in Office in preparing the forthcoming activities of the SEECP.

1.2.11.

To prepare and participate actively in all the SEECP activities, including Summit and ministerial meetings.

1.2.12.

To participate actively in all relevant activities of the EU related to South East Europe and Western Balkans falling within the scope of competence and priority areas of the RCC.

1.2.13.

To cooperate actively and encourage international financial institutions to participate in the programmes and projects of regional importance.

1.2.14.

To initiate a comprehensive and detailed process of streamlining of the existing initiatives in the region with the aim to increase effectiveness and lower the cost.

1.2.15.

To complete the process of institutional affiliation of the regional initiatives relevant for the future effective activity of the RCC through signing of appropriate Memoranda of Understanding (MoU's).

1.2.16. To cooperate with other regional organizations, initiatives and structures (BSEC, CEI, Nordic Council, CBSS etc.).

1.3. Concluding Remarks

The RCC Secretariat is moving into the next phase of its activities with the conviction that the region has achieved tangible progress and that further European and Euro-Atlantic orientation and integration of South East Europe should be maintained, continued and strengthened in line with relevant policies and standards.

In this process, full political and practical support of the SEECP and its Participating States is of utmost importance, having in mind the core objective of the RCC – taking over the regional ownership of the cooperation process in South East Europe. The SEECP, as a political umbrella of the RCC, should, through its bodies and forums, remain fully involved in profiling and defining of the RCC activities. In this context, the endorsement of the Strategic Work Programme of the RCC 2008-2009 by the Heads of State and Government of the SEECP is of utmost importance, as the confirmation of political support of the region to the concrete and project-oriented activities planned in the framework of the RCC.

In addition to that, the RCC's starting appraisal is that development and progress should be stepped up as the only way of overcoming the remaining difficult economic and social challenges. Such continuing progress can be conducive to a favourable and enticing climate for addressing the remaining outstanding issues in the region and make up for the evident lagging behind in some parts of the region with regard to the level of development and standards in other European regions.

The RCC considers South East Europe a part of Europe, rich in natural and human potential and resources, which should be at the core of extensive development projects in order to take full benefit of the favourable geo-economic position of the region.

The RCC appreciates that the mutual cooperation of the SEECF Participating States at various stages with regard to the institutional relations with the EU can act as an additional intra-regional mechanism to trigger and strengthen mutual competition aimed at overall progress.

The RCC will invest efforts to profile South East Europe as a region sharing common European standards and values, driven by the vision of a united Europe, with South East Europe taking its deserved place and role.