



Republic of Serbia
MINISTRY OF
EDUCATION
AND SCIENCE



Task Force Fostering &
Building Human Capital
of the Regional Cooperation Council



**CONCLUSIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
“EVIDENCE BASED POLICY MAKING IN EDUCATION : TURNING RESEARCH INTO
PRACTISE – LEARNING FROM PISA“
15-17 June Belgrade**

The Conference was successfully organized by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Serbia, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration/Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit, the Education Reform Initiative of South East Europe – ERI SEE, the Task Force Fostering and Building Human Capital – TFBHC of the Regional Cooperation Council and KulturKontakt Austria.

This meeting gathered the representatives of the ministries in charge of education and science in the regional countries, the representatives of research units, as well as the representatives of international organizations and non-governmental organizations. In addition to the local participants from Serbia, the Conference gathered the participants from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Slovenia, as well as the experts from the Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Serbia, European Training Foundation – ETF, KulturKontakt Austria, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development – OECD, Regional Cooperation Council and Task Force Fostering and Building Human Capital – TFBHC.

I DAY OF THE CONFERENCE

Summary of the first day of the Conference:

1. How Evidence Based Policy Making might contribute to the Equity/Quality/Efficiency and Effectiveness in education

- Regional inventories of best practices
- Peer learning and sharing of good practices
- Comparative studies and regional research projects

2. Major preconditions: resources and limitations

- Data and statistics – efficient measures
- Common understanding and awareness raising campaigns

- Political will for evidence-based policy making
- 3. Key stakeholders and data collection processes**
 - Governments/policy makers, statistical agencies
 - Enable different stakeholders to participate in policy debate
- 4. How to create more supportive environment for EBP and equity in education**
 - Brokerage agencies
 - Common social understanding of equity and its social relevance
 - Common regional framework (instruments, indicators, peer learning methodologies, information sharing platforms, etc)
- 5. Efficient usage of evidence**
 - Analytical capacities – governments, partners and stakeholders
 - Tools for policy makers

The participants could hear the latest results of the PISA survey 2009, and to view the trends in achievements up to now, to discuss different applications of PISA data and other research results in view of creating public policies for education in different EU countries and environment, and to also discuss limitations of certain sets of data and the role of agencies as “brokers of knowledge”

The following country case studies were presented:

- **Portugal:** catch-up process (political will, PISA as initiator of reforms, radical reform measures such as rationalization of the school network, investing in adult education - NQF)
- **Poland:** assessing impact of reforms through PISA indicators, similar reform measures, education boom, growing education aspirations of youngsters, open questions (ECD participation, teacher are underpaid, low participation of adults in education)
- **Slovenia:** education as a national priority, external examinations, changes in curriculum, gender and discipline-related discrepancies in PISA results – causes to be sought in school; when drawing conclusions from PISA, national context should be taken into account using secondary analyses and country specific data.
- **Serbia:** PISA data changed the mindset of policy makers, key is to identify, describe and multiply the successful schools
- **Croatia:** average PISA results, PISA evaluation became a part of the National Program for Economic Recovery, PISA evaluation became evidence for developing the National Curriculum
- **TF/Denmark:** Importance of research-based teaching and recruitment of quality teachers

The discussions in **working groups** (equity, student competences, efficiency and effectiveness) opened questions relevant to evidence-based decision-making, the preconditions, resources and limitations to evidence-based decision-making, the role of

stakeholders and data collection, creating an environment conducive to evidence-based decision-making and the opportunities of regional cooperation in this field.

The First Working Group entitled **“Social Inclusion and Equity”** focused the discussion on the issues of inclusive education monitoring and evaluation, as well as the opportunities of regional cooperation in this field. Potential opportunities for cooperation are the identification of joint benchmarks and indicators, monitoring mechanisms, a joint methodology for transforming the data into policy-making and systematic and organized good practice sharing mechanisms. The group underlined the need for standardized communication channels among stakeholders in the evidence-based policy-making process.

The Second Working Group entitled **“Quality: Student Competences”** focused the discussion on key competences and main conclusion was that shifting towards student competences successfully requires a balance between content and competence focus as well as an increasing focus on teacher competences.

The Third Working Group entitled **“Efficiency and Effectiveness”** tackled the definitions of efficiency and effectiveness, as well as the relevance of monitoring all types of interventions in the education system. The Group underlined the relevance of qualitative analyses.

Presentations are available at: http://www.inkluzija.gov.rs/?page_id=5841&lang=en

II DAY: KICK-OFF MEETING OF THE JOINT EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY-MAKING CLUSTER OF KNOWLEDGE

The kick-off meeting of the Joint Evidence-based Policy making Cluster of Knowledge of the Education Reform Initiatives of South-Eastern Europe (ERI SEE) and the Task Force Fostering and Building Human Capital (TFBHC) of the Regional Cooperation Council, launched by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Serbia and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister’s for European Integration/Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit, was held within the regional conference on June 16-17 2011 in Belgrade.

The launch of the cluster was initiated at the Regional Workshop for Senior Officials and Experts on Cooperation around Clusters of Knowledge held in December 2010 in Sarajevo, as well as the 14th Meeting of ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative body held in Belgrade in March 2011.

The objectives of the meeting were to:

- ▶ Present the regional Cluster of Knowledge: Evidence-based Policy Making and other regional clusters of knowledge
- ▶ Present regional projects in the field of evidence-based policy making
- ▶ Identify regional priorities and financing opportunities
- ▶ Agree on the agenda of the Cluster and further steps

The Cluster has been launched by the Republic of Serbia aiming to improve the mechanisms of regional cooperation jointly with the regional countries and partner organizations, in the fields which shall contribute to the following objectives:

- Improving communication and cooperation between the research community and policy makers;
- Identifying the mechanisms for a more effective utilization of data and findings of research by decision makers;
- Advancing the research practices in creating education policies;
- Mapping and launching analyses relevant for creating education policies;
- More efficient utilization of EU mechanisms and funds for advancing evidence-based policy-making in education.

The envisaged activities of the Evidence Based Policy Making Cluster were presented, such as preparation of the project with the main focus on Evidence Based Policy Making and preparation of the TAIEX event in the area of education statistics.

In addition to the Evidence-based Policy-making Cluster, other clusters established within these initiatives also presented their activities (Croatia, Romania).

Opportunities for financing regional projects in education were discussed at the meeting, and ongoing projects were presented, as well as those undergoing preparation.

The countries gathered at the cluster meeting **concluded** the following:

1. Serbia shall prepare the formal letters for inviting the countries to take part in the Cluster of Knowledge
2. Cluster will serve as a hub for regional projects in the area of Evidence Based Policy Making
3. Serbia will initiate preparation of the regional project in the area of Evidence Based Policy Making as support and promotion of the Cluster activities. Project will be submitted for available EU funds.

- a. Project will contribute to achievement of the Cluster objectives:
 - i. Enhance communication and cooperation between the research community and policy-makers;
 - ii. Identify mechanisms for a better utilization of research findings by decision-makers;
 - iii. Advance research practice in education policy creation;
 - iv. Map and launch of analyses relevant for education policy development;
4. As a first step for the project preparation, there is a need for mapping of major research institutions in the area, their capacities and current research projects.
 - a. Draft ToR for mapping exercise will be developed by SIPRU
 - b. Funding of the mapping exercise will be conducted from the available Cluster budget and partners funds
5. There is a need to engage external TA to help project development and assist countries to define common needs and priorities.
6. Serbia will check possibility for organization of TAIEX event aimed at strengthening education statistics within the region.