

ERI SEE

EDUCATION REFORM INITIATIVE
OF SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE



**Implementation of the ERI SEE
Work Programme 2014
ACTIVITY REPORT**

March 2015

Centre for Education Policy

ERI SEE

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1. Background

The Ministers responsible for Education and Higher Education in the [Memorandum of Understanding on the Role and Organization of ERI SEE \(MoU\)](#) signed in June 2010 confirmed the importance of education as a key priority for the South Eastern Europe region for finding innovative ways to back the economic growth, sustainable development, competitiveness and for safeguarding equitable and inclusive societies. Through the ERI SEE mission statement the ERI SEE member countries recognised that education and training are crucial in promoting knowledge based, competitive and socially cohesive societies in Europe, and play important role in responding to the chances and challenges of globalisation. They are therefore a key to sustainable development and prosperity, in particular in South Eastern Europe.

In the implementation of the [South East Europe 2020 Strategy](#) (SEE 2020 Strategy) developed by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), education is seen as a powerful tool to address the issue off growth and competitiveness as the main objectives of the strategy. It very much resonates with the commitments of the Ministers of Education and Higher Education expressed in the 2010 MoU as it recognizes the potential of the region to build new competitive edge driven by knowledge and innovation and based on its human capital and, therefore, calls for cooperation in promoting innovation and fostering knowledge – driven growth in the region. At the 17th ERI SEE Governing Board meeting held in Sarajevo, in March 2013, ERI SEE has been appointed as the coordinator of the dimension D. Education and Competences of the SEE 2020 Strategy that focuses on strengthening capacities in the region in various areas contributing directly to achievement of the target of Smart growth pillar to add 300 000 highly qualified people in the workforce. The dimension aims to improve the regional knowledge and skills base and sets specific objectives in two main domains: (1) reduction of early leavers from education and training and (2) increased educational attainment in tertiary education. As regards the first domain, the Strategy envisages a range of actions and measures for the development of practical competences through work based learning, the standardisation of qualifications and removing obstacles for their recognition, and the education of teachers. As regards the second domain, it focuses on increasing participation in education at all levels and the prevention of early school leaving and drop-out from higher education.

Therefore, the ERI SEE Work Programme for 2014 aimed to contribute to the coordination and facilitation of cooperation with an aim of contributing to the implementation of the SEE 2020 Strategy, while building on the experience and activities of ERI SEE over the past years.

2. Summary

In order to facilitate regional cooperation and to contribute to the implementation of SEE 2020 Strategy, the ERI SEE activities in 2014 were streamlined through four thematic areas: 1. Quality Education For All – ensuring equitable access, full participation and high completion; 2. Removing Obstacles to Recognition of Qualifications; 3. Strengthening the Vocational Education and Training Systems and 4. Ensuring Quality Education through Teacher Education.

These thematic areas have been supported administratively through (1) Coordination and Implementation of the ERI SEE Work Programme and (2) Coordination and Monitoring of the SEE 2020 Strategy in the dimension of Education and Competences .

Key ERI SEE achievements in 2014 were:

- Continued support to SEE countries to identify priorities and specific measures to be undertaken at the regional level in order to improve access to education and increase quality of education through teacher training
- Agreed programmes of measures to complement national efforts in these two areas and the achievement of SEE 2020 targets are incorporated in two regional programmes on Prevention of drop outs and reduction of early school leaving and on Teacher Education and Training
- Upgraded competencies of SEE countries for aligning national legislation with the UNESCO/Council of Europe and Bologna Follow-up Group as key mechanism for removing obstacles to recognition of qualifications and increasing regional mobility
- Enhanced institutional cooperation in vocational education and training in South East Europe
- Permanent cooperation and coordination with the RCC and other responsible organisations and bodies in charge of implementation and monitoring of the dimension D. Education and Competences of the SEE 2020 Strategy;
- Increased visibility of ERI SEE in light of the establishing the ERI SEE Secretariat;

ERI SEE achievements in 2014 were accomplished through the following activities:

- The 18th meeting of the ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body on 8 April 2014, Podgorica, Montenegro
- Regional Workshop on Access, Completion and Prevention of Drop out in Education on 15 & 16 September 2014, Budva, Montenegro
- Regional seminar on Removing obstacles to recognition of qualifications on 23 September 2014, Zagreb, Croatia
- Joint seminar of the Cluster of Knowledge on Vocational Education and Training and South East Europe Regional VET Network (SEEVET-Net), under the title Joint ownership of schools and companies / Raising awareness of the advantages of Work Based Learning on 17 & 18 November, Tirana, Albania
- Regional Workshop on Teacher Education and Training, 22 & 23 January 2015, Tirana, Albania.

Centre for Education Policy (CEP) acting as the interim Secretariat of the ERI SEE supported the work of the ERI SEE Governing Board members through facilitating communication, organisation of the Governing Board meetings and maintenance of the information tools. In addition, the ERI SEE Interim Secretariat provided extensive support to the member countries, RCC and OECD in the process of implementation and monitoring of the SEE 2020 Strategy and its dimension D. Education and Competences.

3. ERI SEE activities in 2014

3.1. The 18th meeting of the ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body

The annual meeting of the ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body was held on 8 April 2014 in Podgorica, Montenegro. The meeting was attended by all ERI SEE Governing Board members or their replacements from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, RCC and KulturKontakt Austria (KKA), members of the ERI SEE Consultative Body (Council of Europe - CoE, European Training Foundation - ETF, Netherlands Enterprise Agency), and representatives of the Joint TFBHC and ERI SEE Clusters of Knowledge.



The aim of the meeting was to summarise achievements in 2013 as well as to discuss future perspectives of cooperation within the ERI SEE and the modes and priorities for regional cooperation within the SEE 2020 Strategy. The Governing Board members identified four thematic areas of importance for the cooperation in 2014: Quality Education For All – ensuring equitable access, full participation and high completion; Removing Obstacles to Recognition of Qualifications; Strengthening VET Systems and Ensuring Quality Education through Teacher Education. Two thematic areas and activities under them are prioritized for the development of the regional programmes (for possible funding under the IPA II mechanism), while the other to be in line with the continuing ERI SEE activities. However, participants concluded that all activities should contribute to the implementation of SEE 2020 Strategy. Regarding future activities related to development of the regional programmes, participants suggested taking into consideration the exiting MB IPA draft project proposal as the result of previous of work under the Evidence Based Policy Making Cluster. With regard the monitoring process of the SEE 2020 strategy the

participants emphasized the need for an integrated approach for monitoring on the progresses in education at the regional level and for regionally harmonised data submission requirements (e.g. compatible methodologies and indicators used in the region for different monitoring exercises). Furthermore, participants discussed participation of the ERI SEE in SEE 2020 Flagship Initiatives: joint endeavours by several regional organizations and/or implementers as partners executing mutually reinforcing activities towards the same SEE 2020 goal. The Governing Board members were informed about the cessation of activities within the Task Force Fostering Building Human Capital of the RCC (TFBHC). Follow on expression of interest in extending partnership with ERI SEE in the future in an advisory function, the Governing Board welcomed the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education and Women's Affairs representative as the Consultative Body member.

On this occasion, representatives of member countries were informed about the process of signing the Host Country Agreement as the legal base for the establishment of the ERI SEE Secretariat in Serbia: it was signed by Serbia as the Host Country, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Moldova and Montenegro, and sent through diplomatic channels to the Ministry of Education of Albania. Once the HCA is signed by all ERI SEE member countries, the Republic of Serbia will commence the establishment of the Secretariat which will be done efficiently and in the shortest time possible.

The Governing Board adopted the ERI SEE progress reports for 2013 as well as the ERI SEE Work Programme and Budget for 2014 and the Regional Action Plan for Education and Competences dimension of the SEE 2020 Strategy. In addition, CEP was acknowledged for provision of substantial support to the member countries and the RCC in the process of development and preparation of the SEE 2020 Strategy and its dimension Education and Competences.

The meeting was jointly organised by CEP acting as the ERI SEE Interim Secretariat and the RCC, and hosted by the Ministry of Education of Montenegro.

The meeting materials are available at the [ERI SEE webpage](#).

3.2. Development of the Regional Programmes

RCC has encouraged the SEE 2020 dimension coordinators (including ERI SEE) to develop regional programmes as means of planning regional activities which would contribute to the implementation of SEE 2020 Strategy and achievement of the SEE 2020 targets. Regional Programmes (RP) would be used to fundraise with potential donors to ensure financing for the implementation of the activities planned in the regional programmes. To support the dimension coordinators in developing the regional programmes RCC has provided financial support to engage experts to draft the regional programmes and organise regional consultative workshops to discuss them. In order to facilitate this process, the RCC has prepared the draft SEE 2020 Programming Guidelines (final version is expected in May 2015), providing an example of how a regional programme could look like, while the dimension coordinators remain free to adjust their proposals of regional programmes to the needs of the particular thematic area it covers. When it comes to financing of the regional programmes, IPA II funds are seen as the largest potential fund. For that reason, there has to be a clear and strong political commitment of the countries to cooperate

regionally in the theme covered by the regional programme and to implement joint, regional activities in that area.

As it has already been mentioned two thematic areas and activities under them are prioritized by the members of the ERI SEE Governing Board for the development of regional programmes in 2014. Therefore, two regional programmes have been developed within the dimension D. Education and Competences – one related to Prevention of drop outs and reduction of early school leaving and the second one related to Teacher Education and Training. Both programmes are developed with the financial support of the RCC and strong substantial and technical support of CEP acting as Interim Secretariat ERI SEE.

The development of regional programmes was organised in a following way. Based on the Terms of Reference, the RCC selected two external experts to support ERI SEE member countries in developing the regional programmes. The ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body members were invited to circulate announcements for these engagements to national and international experts.

The engaged experts firstly prepared the regional baseline reports that provided brief country outline as well as the current strategies, policies and measures developed in the countries of the region concerning concrete thematic areas. The baseline reports also take into account already existing reports on the topic as well as previous work of ERI SEE in these fields. The baseline reports were used as foundation for development of a draft regional programmes that were presented at the two regional consultative workshops. The regional workshops provided an opportunity to discuss the baseline reports as well as to give suggestions in order to improve the draft regional programmes.

Apart from two regional programmes being developed within Education and Competences dimension, there are 22 different regional programmes for the SEE 2020 Strategy, in different phases of development.

3.2.1. Regional Workshop on Access, Completion and Prevention of Drop out in Education

The first draft of the Regional Programme in the area of access, participation and completion in education was presented at the Regional Workshop, organised jointly by the RCC and the ERI SEE Interim Secretariat on 15 & 16 September 2014 in Budva, Montenegro, when it was discussed together with the countries representatives and different stakeholders about the baseline report.



Regional Workshop on Access, Completion and Prevention of Drop out in Education (RCC)

Apart from representatives of the ministries responsible for education from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo*, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro and Serbia, and the NIPAC Offices of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, the workshop has benefited, also, from the active participation of national and international experts in the field, academic community dealing with this topic, as well as representatives of international organisations and foundations (RCC, CoE, ETF, KKA, and UNICEF).

The workshop was used as an opportunity to identify objectives, measures and activities that are priority for all countries and, at the same time, can bring benefits to the countries by joint, regional cooperation and implementation. The main, common ideas, identified at the workshop for the improvement of the proposed Regional Programme were: 1) The need to narrow down the focus of the RP to the issues of early school leaving and drop-outs (which is also related to the completion of education), whereas to leave the issue of access to education to national policies and measures; 2) To further develop the RP in the area of designing early warning systems (EWS) that will help identify young people at risk of dropping out and hence implement some targeted measures to reduce the drop outs and early school leaving; 3) To establish monitoring systems to track the progress of pupils throughout education (both compulsory and non-compulsory) and identify which students (or schools) need additional support in order to prevent drop outs and reduce the share of early school leavers among young people; and 4) To establish a system of regional peer learning and sharing of best practices. The participants once again stressed the importance of capacity building in this field.

These were valuable inputs for further development of RP by the RCC external expert who incorporated them into a new version of the RP. The second draft of the Regional Program was sent to all participants for the additional chance to comment on it in a written form. The final version of Regional Program on Prevention of drop outs and reduction of early school leaving was sent to the ERI SEE Governing Board members for formal approval in November 2014, and then passed for the approval to the SEE 2020 Programming Committee, consisting of the representatives of the NIPAC Offices and SEE 2020 National Coordinators.

The Workshop materials including the Report are available at the [ERI SEE webpage](#).

3.2.2. Regional Workshop on Teacher Education and Training

The first draft of the Regional Programme on Teacher Education and Training was presented at the Regional Workshop, organised jointly by the RCC and the ERI SEE Interim Secretariat on 22 & 23 January 2015, Tirana, Albania, when it was discussed together with the baseline report.

The workshop gathered the representatives from ministries and other relevant state institutions from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo*, Moldova, Montenegro, the national experts in the field of the teacher education from all SEE 2020 beneficiaries, as well as representatives of international organizations (RCC, ETF, ETUCE).

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence



The overall objective of the RP is to improve teacher education and training systems in the region in order to advance teacher professionalism, thus contributing to raise the quality of education. This programme is foreseen to ensure quality of pre-service and in-service education and training of primary and secondary teachers (both for general education and VET teachers), development of teacher competences and quality tools and resources for enhancement of teaching practice. This RP will provide suggestions as to how the concept of professional development for teachers should be supported in the SEE 2020 beneficiaries in the region.

Participants of the workshop concluded that there are similarities and common challenges in the social, political, economic and educational systems throughout the SEE region. The shared challenges, similar educational priorities and limited resources (both financial and human) provide strong justification for a regional approach. In addition, results of the baseline analysis were confirmed by the workshop participants. When it comes to the Regional Programme, it was evaluated as an ambitious and comprehensive programme. Document can serve as a programme for regional convergence and as a framework for development of national education programme, measures and initiatives as well. The main directions identified for its improvement are: to strengthen sustainability of project, to avoid overlapping activities with other EU projects and to fine-tune the logical framework matrix (matching correctly indicators, activities and assumptions) as well as budget.

Second version of the Regional Programme, reflecting the discussions and proposals of the workshop participants, was submitted to the ERI SEE Governing Board and participants of the workshop in the beginning of March 2015. Comments will be collected by the end of March, so the document could be finalized by early April 2015 and send to the ERI SEE Governing Board for formal approval and then passed to the SEE 2020 Programming Committee, consisting of the representatives of the NIPAC Offices and SEE 2020 National Coordinators that will convene in the fourth quarter of 2015 to discuss and potentially approve the regional programs developed in the

framework of the implementation of the Education and competences dimension of the SEE 2020 Strategy.

The Workshop materials including the Report are available at the [ERI SEE webpage](#).

3.3. Regional seminar on Removing obstacles to recognition of qualifications

ERI SEE seminar “Removing obstacles to recognition of qualifications”, by aligning national legislation with standards of UNESCO/Council of Europe and Bologna Follow-up Group, was held on 23 September 2014 in Zagreb, Croatia. It was organised by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports of the Republic of Croatia with the support of the RCC.

The seminar gathered the representatives of ministries of education, ENIC/NARIC offices, government agencies for education from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Serbia, Romania, Macedonia, Croatia, Slovenia, as well as representatives of international organizations (RCC, CoE, ETF).



Workshop Removing obstacles to Recognition of Qualifications (Ministry of Education, Science and Sports of Croatia)

The purpose of the seminar was to upgrade competencies for amending national legislative framework on recognition of qualifications in line with the UNESCO/CoE *Recommendation on the use of Qualification Frameworks in the recognition of foreign qualifications* (a subsidiary text to the Lisbon Convention) and the Bucharest Communiqué, as well to provide a forum for discussing possible policy solutions. Harmonisation of all national legislative frameworks in the region with the UNESCO/CoE/BFUG guidelines is a key mechanism for removing obstacles to recognition of qualifications and increasing regional mobility.

The first part of the meeting was devoted to the presentation of good practices on national legislative framework on recognition, during which the example of Slovenian experience was presented. Next, the Draft proposal of the act on recognition of foreign education qualifications in the Republic of Croatia was portrayed. The later topic on the agenda was the evidence base for

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upgrading the recognition of qualifications in Serbia and Kosovo*, followed by the presentation of the results of the survey on recognition of degrees of other countries in the region (cross recognition) of the Slovenian Ministry of Education, Science and Sports. Fruitful discussions arose after each session. All the participants shared the opinion that the topic of mutual recognition of qualifications among countries of the region should be high on the national education policy agenda, since fair and fast recognition of qualifications is a prerequisite for regional mobility for the purpose of employment, as well as for the purpose of continuation of education. When it comes to the obstacles to cross-country recognition, very useful insight was gained from the general findings of the survey of Slovenian Ministry. There are significant differences in national legislation and recognition procedures between the countries in the region. Recognition and assessment of pre-Bologna degrees present an obstacle, since majority of the countries did not regulate how pre-Bologna degrees are placed in the current Bologna-based educational system. Furthermore, a stage of development of the National Qualifications Framework differs significantly among countries as well as its referencing to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) and self-certification to the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (an obstacle to the automatic recognition) and the so-called »specialized studies« have been carried out in majority of countries (except for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Slovenia). Possible measures for removing these obstacles were: exchange of information and practices in the field of recognition, mapping of current situation in the region (peer learning); increase the link between recognition procedure and European Qualification Frameworks (EQF); increase quality assurance mechanisms; comparable and uniform use of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and Diploma supplement (DS). These obstacles and measures should be taken into consideration in the preparation of the ERI SEE Work Programme 2015, and mentioned at the next annual meeting of ENIC/NARIC network. Furthermore, activities on cross-recognition should be continued at the next ERI SEE event on the topic of recognition of educational qualifications. The Ministry of Education, Science and Sports of Croatia expressed its willingness to continue with coordination of activities related to this topic, which acted as a coordinator of the ERI SEE activities in this area for the past 5 years.

The full report from the seminar is available at the [ERI SEE webpage](#).

3.4. Joint seminar of the Cluster of Knowledge on Vocational Education and Training and South East Europe Regional VET Network (SEEVET-Net)

Joint seminar of the Cluster of Knowledge on VET: Modernising VET system – improving performance, quality and attractiveness of VET (CoK on VET), led by Romania, and the South East Europe Regional VET Network (SEEVET-Net) took place on 17 & 18 November, in Tirana, Albania. It was organised by the ERI SEE interim Secretariat, with support of the Romanian National Centre for TVET Development and KulturKontakt Austria and hosted by the Albanian National Agency of Vocational Education and Training & Qualifications. The seminar gathered national representatives of VET centres and relevant institutions, and representatives of social partners from: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Kosovo*, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia, as well as representatives of international organizations (ETF, KKA and RCC). The thematic focus of

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the joint seminar was Work Based Learning – a theme that has been identified as a priority by both initiatives. Also, the SEE 2020 Strategy within its Education and Competences component recognises the increased use of work-based learning as a key strategy action in order to ensure education and training systems better meet economic and labour market needs (and provide learners with labour market relevant skills). Follow on conclusions from the CoK on VET Regional Workshop “Work Based Learning – Success Factors and Challenges for the Various Forms of WBL” held in December 2013, in Vienna and in order to avoid overlaps between these two regional initiatives in VET the focus of the event was on Joint ownership of schools and companies/Raising awareness of the advantages of Work Based Learning.



During the first part of the meeting, participants could hear an update on the activities of Cluster of Knowledge on VET, Work Based Learning in Romanian Initial VET, Work Based Learning in Albanian VET and international practice of starting WBL. In addition, each country had the opportunity to present the state of play and steps undertaken on the level of policies on the one side, and on the level of projects supported by donor community on the other side. There are several topics identified to be worked on in the next period, and these are: concept of work based learning, promotion of work based learning in business sector, legal framework for work based learning (part in companies), quality assurance, company trainers’ pedagogical skills, as well the question of financial incentives. The second part of the meeting was devoted to the presentations of the SEEVET-Net membership, activities, cooperation and ERI SEE Work Programme for 2014, ongoing regional projects of the European Training Foundation and KulturKontakt Austria in VET. Within the discussion on the role of SEEVET-Net in view of other regional initiatives, country delegations were invited to propose activities on above mentioned topics or to send the proposals to interim ERI SEE Secretariat as way to collect and shared ideas for further consultations. Concerning the election of a new Chair of the SEEVET-Net (one year mandate), the process was postponed for the next meeting as few persons who have mandate to deciding on this are not present at the meeting. Director of the VET Centre of Montenegro proposed setting up the SEEVET-Net as independent entity with head office in Podgorica. For the needs of submitting the proposal to SEEVET-Net members and ERI SEE Governing Board, it is necessary that VET Centre of Montenegro

prepare written explanation on their vision of establishment of the SEEVET-Net head office, time framework, proposal of the future SEEVET-Net legal status (domestic organisation operating in the region or international organisation), explanation on how the signing of agreement between countries is foreseen, and proposal of financial plan and send it to interim ERI SEE Secretariat.

All materials from the event including the presentations are available at the [ERI SEE website](#).

3.5. Coordination and Monitoring of the SEE 2020 Strategy – Dimension D. Education and Competences

Apart from extensive support to the member countries and the RCC in the process of developing the regional programmes, representatives of CEP acting as the interim Secretariat of the ERI SEE actively participated at the following events under the SEE 2020 Strategy:

- 3rd Meeting of the SEE 2020 Coordination Board, Brussels, 16 January 2014
- Workshop on Monitoring the South East Europe 2020 Strategy, 10 March 2014, Paris
- 5th Meeting of the SEE 2020 Coordination Board, 24 September 2014, Brussels

Having in mind the complexities of the coordination and monitoring process of the SEE 2020 Strategy CEP prepared and disseminated the following documents to the ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body:

Detailed Report from the Workshop on Monitoring the SEE 2020 Strategy (sent on 13 March 2014 to the ERI SEE Governing Board), which includes a summary of OECD presentations on the overall Monitoring process and the quantitative indicators in particular as well as concerns raised by CEP acting as the ERI SEE interim secretariat on the proposed framework for monitoring the SEE 2020 Strategy.

Report on Monitoring process of the SEE 2020 Strategy (sent on 7 October 2014 to the ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body) with an overview of the monitoring framework of the SEE 2020 Strategy, followed by an update on different elements of the process.

Information note on the proposal for a Joint Working Group on the recognition of professional qualifications between the Ministries responsible for Education, Trade and Labour Market facilitated by RCC, ERI SEE and CEFTA (sent on 15 October 2014 to the ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body).

Report from the 5th Meeting of the SEE 2020 Coordination Board (sent on 10 November 2014 to the ERI SEE Governing Board and Consultative Body) which provides an update on the SEE 2020 Strategy and the preparation of regional programmes across all of the dimensions of the SEE 2020 Strategy.

In 2014, the ministries of education from the region have been under significant time pressure to comment on monitoring framework developed by the OECD as well as to conduct the first cycle of collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. Centre for Education Policy acting as Interim Secretariat of ERI SEE made it clear at all the meetings of regional coordinators, to RCC and the

OECD that better management, and especially time management is necessary to ensure the quality of the process. Specific request was to allow a minimum of 3 months for collection of data in all the next rounds of data collection. Furthermore, the countries requested operationalisation of the SEE 2020 Strategy, as well as a revision of targets to ensure that the targets are more realistic and relevant to the changing socio-economic environment. As a follow up, the Task Force of the SEE 2020 Monitoring will be established in 2015 by the RCC to review existing targets and indicators and to make them relevant to the current context of the participating countries. In addition, in the beginning of the 2015, the RCC has started the process of preparation of the Monitoring Guidelines for the SEE 2020 Strategy. This process is supported by the GIZ. Centre for Education Policy acting as Interim Secretariat ERI SEE was invited to give the feedback on the data collection process, support to national contact points and data quality check, challenges experienced and positive aspects of the process, which stakeholders should be involved for the Monitoring Guidelines and how the data in the dimension D. Education and Competencies should be used and disseminated.

First cycle of the quantitative data collection took place from 18 March-16 April 2014. The partial data (due to constraints of national statistics) was delivered by all ERI SEE countries. The quantitative data collected in the first round was used in the preparation of the first [SEE 2020 Baseline Report: Towards Regional Growth](#), which was adopted at the first SEE 2020 Governing Board meeting in June 2014, in Bucharest, Romania. The Baseline Report provides the first opportunity to review the macro-economic context in which the Strategy is being implemented; the actions planned at national and regional level; and to consider key issues arising from the work undertaken to date on the Strategy. Moreover, it seeks to provide all those involved in implementing and supporting the SEE 2020 Strategy with a clear understanding of the challenges facing the region across the different policy dimensions as they strive to achieve the agreed headline targets.

The approach for collection of the qualitative data consisted of two parallel assessments (government self-assessment and independent assessment) based on the same set of indicators. Both government assessments carried out by different agencies and ministries and co-ordinated by the ERI SEE and independent assessment carried out by country consultants, contracted by the OECD took place between 22 September and 30 October 2014. The OECD experts have gone through the government assessments and asked for some additional clarifications which countries provided during November and December 2014.

The two assessments were discussed and aggregated at the SEE 2020 Monitoring Stakeholder Meetings held at the beginning 2015 (in Pristina on 3-4 February, Podgorica on 5-6 February, Tirana on 9-10 February, Sarajevo on 18-19 February, Belgrade on 26-27 February, and Skopje on 2-3 March). The meetings were organized by the RCC and OECD with the support of regional dimension coordinators, and attended by the regional organisations and networks, the RCC, the OECD, relevant government ministries and agencies, the country consultants, the private sector, representatives from academia, as well as other SEE2020 stakeholders.

The estimated workload of each regional organisation acting as a dimension coordinator (including ERI SEE) to contribute and coordinate the monitoring process of the SEE 2020 Strategy was initially estimated between 60 and 80 working days per year. However, after one year of acting as the dimension coordinator, CEP acting as the ERI SEE Interim Secretariat has confirmed that the workload has been significantly increased due to both the monitoring coordination and the regional

programming process. All of the staff costs related to the coordination of the dimension D. Education and Competences has been covered through regular membership fees of ERI SEE member countries, which should have been covering regular ERI SEE activities. RCC is working on the modalities to support the regional dimension coordinators in implementing this demanding task.

3.6. Networking with ERI SEE institutional partners and facilitation of information exchange

Apart from the networking activities related to the coordination and monitoring of the education dimension of the SEE 2020 Strategy, representatives of the ERI SEE Interim Secretariat - Centre for Education Policy presented the work of ERI SEE at several meetings and other events of the ERI SEE institutional partners:

- [2nd Regional Technical Monitoring Meeting](#) within the FRAME initiative, 25 June 2014, Turin, Italy, organised by the ETF. The meeting's objective was the FRAME monitoring tool, an evidence-based tool to help SEET countries for progress follow-up towards achieving the Skills 2020 Vision.
- [3rd Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region](#), 26 & 27 June 2014, hosted by the European Commission and the City of Vienna 2014 in co-operation with the Austrian Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs (BMBF). ERI SEE was presented within the Priority Area 9 workshop on "Investing in inclusive and innovative education and training for better socio-economic outcomes"
- The thematic conference "[Empowering marginalised groups through education and training in the Danube Region](#)", 2 & 3 October 2014 in Vienna, Austria, organised by National Agency for Lifelong Learning in cooperation with the BMBF as EUSDR Priority Area 9 Coordinator. The event provided an opportunity to gain insight into existing and completed projects emphasizing on the topic Social Inclusion of individuals from vulnerable groups, especially the Roma communities within the Lifelong Learning Programme. Further, the Erasmus+ program was highlighted as possibility for continuing the international activities.
- "High Level Conference on Skills for the future - Western Balkans and Turkey – FRAME validation event", 6 October 2014, Tirana, Albania, organised by the ETF where the Ministers from SEET responsible for Education and Employment along with high officials from other relevant Ministries, EU Institutions, international organisations and social partners met in order to discuss and exchanged views on the long term skills visions, their priorities and their efforts through FRAME to improve VET and HRD systems.
- 3rd International Stakeholder Conference "Investing in People and Skills in the Danube Region Impact – Projects – Future Developments", 6 & 7 November 2014, Vienna, Austria hosted by the BMBF and the Austrian Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection. The conference goal was to provide space for reviewing on the impact, activities and achievements of the EUSDR during the past three years as well as to

discuss how efficient and targeted funding for increased Danube Region cooperation in the field of education and the labour market can be secured.

In order to reach its widely set objectives of supporting education-related reforms in South East Europe, ERI SEE facilitated information exchange through regular updates of the ERI SEE website. The library of documents on ERI SEE thematic areas, as well as the information about ERI SEE and partners' activities were regularly updated with the new relevant information in 2014. Moreover, the library per each ERI SEE member country was updated with the most relevant documents on education and training. Besides, CEP has maintained communication and update on ERI SEE activities by disseminating relevant information to the Governing Board members and through the network of national contact points during 2014.