

Regional cooperation on health issues important, RCC will continue to support it



*Mr. Nand Shani
Expert on Economic and Social Development
Regional Cooperation Council*

During the past decade, Southeast European (SEE) countries have advanced on the path towards building peace and stability as well as improving living conditions for their citizens. In this context, regionally-owned and led cooperation has been fully recognized and used as an important instrument for development and progress.

Among the multitude of regional initiatives that give life to cooperation in the region, the SEE Health Network (SEEHN), now in its second decade of activities, has been the regional cooperation mechanism that has implemented a wide range of successful projects with concrete results in the realm of public health. The establishment of the SEEHN secretariat and Regional Health Development Centers (RHDC) in member countries is contributing to the sustainability and ownership of regional cooperation in public health issues.

While public health is seen as an important contributor to economic and social development, mental health is an important priority in a post conflict region.

The establishment of the RHDC on mental health in SEE in 2010, within the Ministry of Civil Affairs of B&H, strengthened regional cooperation in this sector, building on the achievements of the earlier mental health project. The establishment of a common regional vision, the political and institutional commitment and concrete actions, such as the improved access to mental health care, the establishment of community mental health centers and increased general public awareness, are significant outcomes of this cooperation process.

The Regional Cooperation Council, as an intergovernmental organization in SEE, acts as the major focal point for promoting cooperation in the region. The RCC Secretariat actively participates in the SEEHN activities and provides continued support. The Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation between the RCC Secretariat and the SEEHN, concluded in 2009, sets a clear platform for strengthening this relationship. The RCC will continue to work closely with the SEEHN and all established RHDCs through actively coordinating and networking with other relevant regional initiatives, as well as interlinking with the international community.