



RegionalCooperationCouncil

ANNUAL REPORT 2012-2013

of the Secretary General of the
Regional Cooperation Council
on regional cooperation
in South East Europe



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25 April 2013



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FOREWORD

Five years ago, having a sense of shared purpose, the governments of SEE instituted the blocks of the RCC, a regionally-owned and driven organization. In this sense, RCC epitomizes the region's unity in fostering dialogue, reconciliation and stability in our region. It also recurrently calls for an unwavering stance on the European and Euro-Atlantic integration path.

Respectively, looking over the past period, I am confident in saying that the foundations for better correlation with the fast-paced and demanding environment are in place.

RCC evolved into a matured actor promoting and strengthening regional cooperation, upholding an all-inclusive and regionally-owned framework and supporting the European and Euro-Atlantic perspectives of the aspirants from the region. It remained persistent in ensuring sustainable progress across many key areas of cooperation and impartial in facilitating the efforts directed at cultivating a climate of trust and mutual respect across the region.

The developments over the last period indicate that the region should be mindful. A duality in SEE, whereby the struggle between going forward and lagging behind, absorbs the potential needed to ensure durable results in many vital sectors. Therefore, the progress has been decidedly mixed.

However, we should of course look at the positive aspects too, as they offer the guidelines for the future.

Integration into the European Union remains a strategic goal for the region and the European Union. Both are continuing to invest efforts in view of maintaining the momentum and making progress in the accession process. Furthermore, regional cooperation is an important European Union membership pre-condition and a means to ensure prosperity in the region.

This leads me to what the RCC has been doing and intends to do in this respect.

First, the successful implementation of the RCC Strategy and Work Programme for the period 2011-2013 integrated efforts from governmental, non-profit and private sectors in reaching goals set by the region.

Second, on the basis of the achievements and the in-depth knowledge of the region and its needs, as well as the EU accession requirements, the RCC has developed its Strategy and Work Programme for the period 2014-2016, with the SEE 2020 as its central pillar.

Third, the RCC has paved the road for the SEE 2020 - a Job-creating Growth and EU Integration Strategy. Its main goal is to turn the tides against the present economic stagnation by improving living conditions in the region, bringing back its focus on competitiveness and development and fully concentrating on growth, thus underling the EU accession efforts of the aspirants from South East Europe.

Fourth, the RCC can be proud to have ensured all-inclusiveness in its activities. It shows that the region is able to take responsibility for its own future and create a climate for overall progress in the spirit of tolerance and cooperation.

In pursuing its mission in the period ahead, the RCC will continue to deploy multidimensional activities, thereby guiding and monitoring regional cooperation and taking fully into account regional needs and interests. The focus of its work will be on the implementation of the new SWP 2014-2016 and, in particular, on the finalization of the SEE 2020 strategy and coordination of activities related to the achievement of its goals, further developing the synergy and cooperation with the SEECPC-i-O, continuing to support the efforts of the aspirants from SEE on their way toward European and Euro-Atlantic integration, strengthening the operational capacities of the organization and increasing the awareness and understanding of the RCC's mission and results.

Goran Svilanovic
Secretary General
Regional Cooperation Council



SUMMARY

The Annual Report 2012-2013 reflects developments in regional cooperation, results of the implementation of the RCC SWP 2011-2013, next triennial RCC SWP and RCC's role in the SEE 2020 framework, synergy and coordination between the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEEC) and the RCC, and state of institutional relations of the RCC participants from SEE with the EU. It aims to contribute to a better insight in the state and perspective of the regional cooperation in SEE.

The successful implementation of the RCC SWP 2011-2013 integrated efforts from governmental, non-profit and private sectors in reaching the goals set by the region. It entailed meeting not only 22 distinct objectives set in the priority areas of cooperation, but also increasing the overall capacity of the RCC Secretariat to function in the region's best interests. A range of specific targets in each of the priority areas of the SWP 2011-2013 has been achieved. Based on the achievements and the increased in-depth knowledge of the region and its needs, as well as the EU accession requirements, the RCC has developed its second SWP 2014-2016. The new phase in consolidating regional cooperation and making it more effective is marked by the SEE 2020, a Job-creating Growth and EU Integration Strategy, which has become the backbone of the RCC SWP 2014-2016, aligning the region with *Europe 2020*. The SEE 2020 strategy places regional cooperation in a clear and coherent framework, linking national priorities with regional platforms and identifying the most important gaps to be addressed over the long term. Quantitative strategic targets adopted by the region's economies in the areas of economic growth, trade, investment, education, employment and governance are being translated into policy objectives, with action plans at both national and regional levels being developed.

The first RCC Secretary General Mr. Hido Bisevic completed successfully his five-year mandate and the new Secretary General Mr. Goran Svilanovic took office on 1 January 2013, following the appointment by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of SEEC participating states in Belgrade on 14 June 2012.

The strategic synergy and coordination between the SEEC Chairmanship-in-Office (C-i-O) and the RCC have been strengthened. In its capacity as the operational arm of the SEEC, the RCC participated in, and contributed to political and sectoral events organized by the C-i-O, as well as in preparing different documents of the SEEC.

The RCC continued to be engaged in ensuring the respect of the principle of all-inclusiveness by successfully organizing different events and meetings with presence of all its participants from SEE. In this respect, the RCC Board adopted a decision providing for an effective participation of Kosovo* within the RCC. This decision shows the ability of the region to take responsibility for its own future and create conditions for overall progress in the spirit of tolerance and cooperation.

The RCC Board also adopted a decision on the new Statute of the RCC which reflects the new realities in SEE.

The full EU membership remained a strategic goal for the region and the EU. And both the region and the EU continued to invest their efforts within the EU enlargement policy aimed at maintaining its momentum and making progress in the accession process, however with different results.

The conclusions and decisions of the EU on enlargement and stabilisation and association reaffirmed its unequivocal commitment to the European perspective of the Western Balkans, which remained essential for the stability, reconciliation and future of the region, and welcomed further progress made by Western Balkans regarding regional cooperation and reconciliation, while stressing the importance of inclusiveness of this process. The December 2012 Conclusions of the Council of the EU recalled the role of the RCC and welcomed its focus on the growth targets in the context of the SEE 2020 strategy.

On 27 February 2013, the RCC marked its 5th anniversary with a panel discussion and inauguration of Champion of Regional Cooperation - annual award for best achievement in cooperation in SEE. The discussion *Five years of Regional Cooperation Council: Building on foundations and embracing new challenges* focused on achievements and future challenges of regional cooperation in SEE. The Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) 2006 became the first Champion of Regional Cooperation. The award is given to an individual or an institution that has contributed the most to the development of regional cooperation.

The RCC received the traditional Sloboda (Freedom) award for an extraordinary contribution to humanism, fight for human rights and freedom in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Europe and the world.

In pursuing its mission in the period ahead, the RCC will continue to deploy multidimensional activities, thereby guiding and monitoring regional cooperation and taking fully into account regional needs and interests. The focus of its work will be on the implementation of the new SWP 2014-2016 and, in particular, on the finalization of the SEE 2020 Strategy and coordination of activities related to the achievement of its goals. The RCC will further develop the synergy and cooperation with the SEEC C-i-O, continuing to support the efforts of the aspirants on their way toward European and Euro-Atlantic integration, strengthening the operational capacities of the organization and increasing awareness and understanding of the RCC's mission and results.



*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.



1

General trends in regional cooperation in South East Europe and the role of Regional Cooperation Council

In the period May 2012 - May 2013, the South East Europe (SEE) has mainly been marked by the socio-economic difficulties influencing all areas of its development. In these circumstances, an active pursuit of the European Union (EU) enlargement policy and maintaining its momentum remained a strategic goal for the region and the EU, taking also into account the importance of regional cooperation as an essential element of the overall enlargement and the Stabilisation and Association Process in particular. While the EU continued to be the strongest anchor of stabilization and reforms, key role in consolidating regional cooperation has been played by the South East European Cooperation Process (SEECP), as the most relevant regional political structure, fully regionally owned and governed from the very beginning; the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), which celebrated its fifth anniversary as an effective operational arm of the SEECP and the main regional coordination mechanism; and over 50 different regional organizations, initiatives and networks operating in different areas of common interest for the countries in the region.

The strategic synergy and coordination between the SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office (C-i-O) and the RCC have been further strengthened. The RCC has continued investing all its efforts in implementing the final stage of the SWP 2011-2013 and, in parallel, working on the new SWP 2014-2016 and preparing the SEE 2020 strategy.

The RCC continued to be engaged in ensuring the respect of the principle of all-inclusiveness by successfully organizing different events and meetings with presence of all its participants from SEE. The RCC Board, at its meeting in Sarajevo on

28 February 2013, decided to amend Annex I (list of participants) and Annex II (Statute of the RCC) of the Joint Declaration on the Establishment of the RCC, thus providing for an effective participation of Kosovo* within the RCC.

This decision shows the ability of the region to take responsibility for its own future and create conditions for overall progress in the spirit of tolerance and cooperation.

The first RCC Secretary General Mr. Hido Biscevic completed successfully his five year mandate and the new Secretary General Mr. Goran Svilanovic took the office on 1 January 2013, following the appointment by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the South East European Cooperation Process (SEECP) participating states in Belgrade on 14 June 2012.

The RCC has been promoting cooperation based on greater regional responsibility and a genuine political dedication by its participants from SEE in implementing commitments made at the regional level. It enhanced its monitoring and guiding role in regional cooperation, taking fully into account regional interests and feeding policy implementation within the RCC participants from South East Europe.

By exhibiting flexibility in pursuing its mandate and working on the basis of openness, dialogue and solidarity, it helped the creation of an environment conducive for the RCC participants from SEE to embrace the principles of trust and mutual respect in addressing different bilateral and regional issues.



The successful implementation of the RCC SWP 2011-2013 paved the way for the preparation and programming of a successor strategy covering the period 2014-2016. Based on the achievements, the increased in-depth knowledge of the region and its needs, as well as the EU accession requirements, the RCC has developed its second SWP 2014-2016 with the SEE 2020 - A Job-creating Growth and EU Integration Strategy as the central pillar.

This document sets out sectoral priorities that are generally borne out from regional and national priorities as well as the actions it intends to undertake to implement them.

With the SWP 2014-2016, the RCC will assume greater responsibility in fostering long-term planning and vision building in regional cooperation, hence reflecting the growing capacity of its main stakeholders from SEE in the area of strategic planning and development of regional platforms and programmes.

The participants of the RCC were regularly consulted at high-levels and the strategic synergy between the SEECP C-i-O and the RCC Secretariat was strengthened. The RCC took active role in preparing and/or organizing political and sectoral high-level and other meetings organized by the SEECP C-i-O in the period 2012-2013. The issues discussed included the future forms and scope of cooperation in SEE, such as organizing thematically focused and targeted SEECP Summits, increasing

the frequency of the meetings of the SEECP Ministers of Foreign Affairs, and enhancing the position of the RCC National Coordinators within their respective administrations.

At the SEECP Summit in Belgrade in June 2012, organized by the SEECP C-i-O for the period 2011-2013, the role of the RCC, as an advanced instrument of regional cooperation in SEE, has been highly appraised. It was stressed that the SEECP should use the institutional backing provided by the RCC in order to transfer political declarations and decisions into concrete projects and programmes to the benefit of the citizens of the region. The value of engaging the region and its partners in the development of concrete trans-regional projects such as the reconstruction, rehabilitation and modernization of railway systems in SEE, has also been pointed out.

Coordination meetings between the SEECP Troika¹, the RCC Secretariat and the European Union (EU), held back-to-back with the meetings of the RCC Board, represented valuable fora for discussing and reviewing developments within regional cooperation in SEE and harmonizing the priorities of the country holding the SEECP C-i-O with the RCC.

*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.

¹The SEECP Troika consists of the former, the current and the future country holding the Chairmanship-in-Office of the SEECP (in the period 2012-2013 Republic of Serbia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Romania).

The full EU membership remained a strategic goal for the region and the EU. And both the region and the EU continued to invest their efforts within the EU enlargement policy, aimed at maintaining its momentum and making progress in the accession process, however with different results.

The Croatia Accession Treaty was ratified by majority EU member states as the country prepares to join the EU on 1 July 2013. The steps taken by the Commission and Turkey to implement the positive agenda in line with the Negotiating Framework were welcomed. The accession negotiations with Montenegro opened in June 2012 are progressing. Possible decisions to open accessions negotiations with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia will be examined on the basis of reports presented by the EC in spring 2013. Possible decision on granting a candidate status to Albania will be examined on the basis of the EC report. The launch of the EC's High-Level Dialogue on the Accession Process with Bosnia and Herzegovina was welcomed and further progress in the implementation of commitments is pending. Possible decision to open negotiations for SAA for Kosovo* will be examined on the basis of a report to be presented by the EC and HR/VP in spring 2013.

Moldova's aspirations are being realised within a different institutional framework - the European Neighbourhood Policy's Eastern Partnership - and the country is advancing in its Negotiations on the Association Agreement with the EU, including a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area as its essential part.



In its Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2012-2013², the EC acknowledged that the Western Balkans achieved further progress in regional cooperation in a number of areas, including sensitive ones. The EC references related to the RCC are positive and encouraging. It expects that the RCC will continue developing its role in regional cooperation as a platform for the promotion of issues of importance to the whole region and its EU perspective, thus further mainstreaming regionally owned and driven cooperation in the countries' political agenda. The importance of economic recovery in the enlargement countries and the progress the RCC has made in adapting the *Europe 2020* process to the regional needs and realities have been underlined. The EC undertook to support these joint reform efforts and the regional monitoring approach, among other with IPA funds, which was confirmed by a series of measures to promote regional cooperation between Western Balkan countries. In the period 2012-2013, through IPA funds, the EU supported cooperation with international financial institutions to mobilise funding, help develop civil society, support education schemes such as student mobility programmes, and help beneficiaries meet the requirements for EU membership and align their standards with the EU³.



The conclusions and decisions of the EU on enlargement, and stabilisation and association reaffirmed its unequivocal commitment to the European perspective of the Western Balkans, which remained essential for the stability, reconciliation and future of the region, and welcomed the further progress made by the Western Balkans regarding regional cooperation and reconciliation, while stressing the importance of the inclusiveness of this process.

The December 2012 Conclusions of the EU Council regarding the RCC are particularly important, as they pointed out that: "...The Council recalls the role of the Regional Cooperation Council, welcoming its focus on the growth targets in the context of the SEE 2020 strategy, which aims to adapt the Europe 2020 process to the regional needs and realities."⁴

The RCC Secretary General and the RCC Secretariat further enhanced the cooperation and communication with EU institutions, in particular with the European Commission, thus ensuring a closer alignment of the RCC activities with the EU enlargement agenda. The regular dialogue with the European Parliament (EP), the European External Action Service (EEAS), the Presidencies of the Council of the EU and the General Secretariat of the Council proved its value added in underlining the importance of the RCC in the overall context of the regional cooperation.

Marking RCC's fifth anniversary with an event entitled "Five years of Regional Cooperation Council: Building on foundations and embracing new challenges" in Sarajevo on 27 February 2013 has been a significant contribution to the visibility of the achievements made and better understanding of the future challenges of regional cooperation in SEE. A high-level panel discussion and an award for best achievement in cooperation in SEE were the central elements of the event. The Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) 2006 became the first *Champion of Regional Cooperation*. The award is given to an individual or an institution that has contributed the most to the development of regional cooperation. It is also meant to contribute to positive profiling and rebranding of the region. A special acknowledgement for the promotion of cooperation in SEE was awarded to Hido Bisevic, first Secretary General of the RCC and to Erhard Busek, former Special Coordinator of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe.

The RCC received the traditional *Sloboda (Freedom)* award for an extraordinary contribution to humanism, fight for human rights and freedom in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Europe and the world. The award reflects a growing recognition of RCC's work to bring people in SEE closer together, through dialogue, good neighborly relations, in an atmosphere of tolerance and cooperation.

² COM(2012) 600, Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2012-2013.

³ European Commission, "EU invests €272.75 million to promote regional cooperation in the Western Balkans", press release, 27 March 2013.

⁴ Council of the European Union, "Conclusion on Enlargement and Stabilisation and Association Process", <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/12/st17/st17604.en12.pdf>, 11 December 2012, pp. 1-30 (p.17).



Developments in
priority areas of
regional cooperation
in South East Europe
within Regional
Cooperation Council
framework

GENERAL REMARKS



2.1

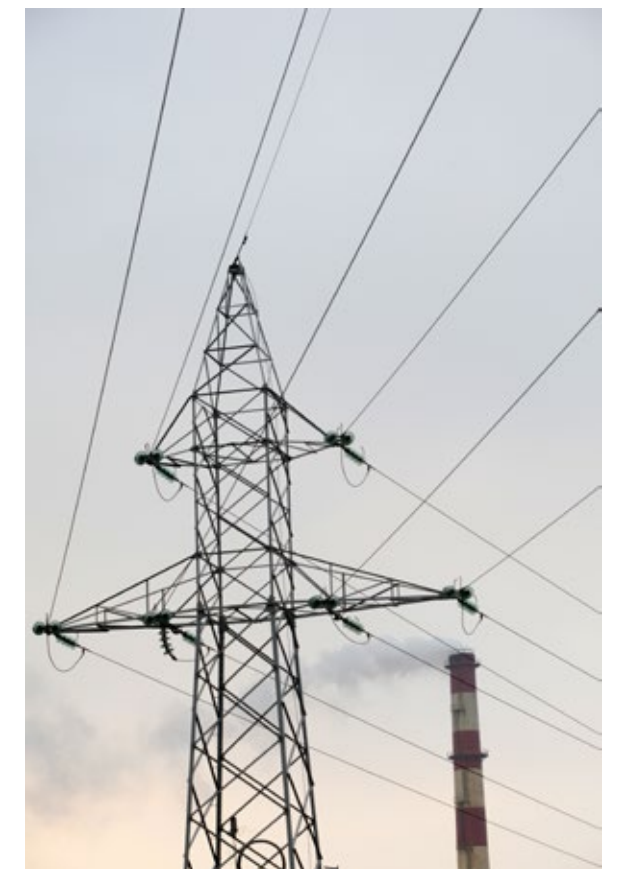
GENERAL REMARKS

Besides implementation of the RCC SWP 2011-2013, the most important activities of the RCC Secretariat were related to the preparation of the RCC SWP 2014-2016, as well as to the adoption of main objectives and further development of the SEE 2020 strategy. A wide consultation process has been initiated and numerous workshops and brainstorming meetings have been organized.

The RCC Secretariat was intensively involved in different activities organized in the SEECF framework, in particular in preparing a number of sectoral meetings organized by the SEECF C-i-O for the period 2012-2013 and related to the RCC SWP 2011-2013 (parliamentary dimension, ministries of culture, ministries of science, etc.), as well as of other events of general importance for the RCC.

A range of specific targets in each of the priority area of the SWP 2011-2013 have been achieved, namely: South East Europe Investment Committee (SEEIC) proved to be the key catalyst and the main development vehicle for SEE 2020 strategy which included a substantial dimension provided by the Social Agenda for the Western Balkans 2020; several initiatives were launched regarding sustainable energy development and energy efficiency, road and air transport and water management and climate change in the SEE; Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism to measure progress achieved by the 2011-2013 Regional Strategic Document in the area of Justice and Home Affairs became operational; creating regional mechanism of cooperation among the Chiefs of Military Intelligence (SEEMIC), the Heads of the South East European National Security Authorities (SEENSA), and the South East European Counter-Intelligence Chiefs Forum (SEECIC) enhanced the

dialogue and common analytical activities in this area; finalizing the Regional Strategy for Research and Development for Innovation for the Western Balkans and implementing the second phase of the Ljubljana Process through the RCC Task Force on Culture and Society contributed to smart dimensions of the SEE growth; the parliamentary cooperation both in the SEECF format and related to the *acquis* adoption in the Western Balkans has got a boost in the reporting period; and networking and cooperation through the European Association of Public Service Media in SEE and Academy on Media Law, both established with the RCC support, became an asset in the media development in the region.



The current work of the RCC Secretariat in preparing the next RCC SWP 2014-2016, as well as in coordinating the elaboration of the SEE 2020 strategy demonstrates that the interconnection between regional cooperation and European agenda remains vital. The RCC Secretariat benefited enormously from it as well as from the experience and feedback of the RCC participants from SEE, already members of the EU.

The dialogue with the DG Enlargement continued to be regular and substantial, as well as with CEFTA, OECD Investment Compact, SEETO, SEECEL, RESPA and other key partners. Furthermore, the RCC Secretariat intensified contacts with other DGs in the EC (DG REGIO, DG MOVE, DG Research, Innovation and Science, DG Education and Culture, DG International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response, DG Employment, etc.) as well as with

specialised units within the European External Action Service for security cooperation area. The RCC Secretariat is further strengthening cooperation with other regional structures in SEE and the Western Balkans as it is shown in detail per each priority area.

As part of its activities of coordinating donor efforts in the region, the RCC Secretariat took part in donor-organized activities such as the Regional NIPAC coordination meetings and workshops. The RCC Secretariat also took active part at the WBIF Steering Committee Meeting and ETF/OECD/RCC/WB and ELARG/EMPL Coordination Meetings on the activities starting in 2013. Consultations have been regularly held with other donors interested in regional projects (UNDP, OSCE, IBRD, SDC, SIDA, FES, GIZ, HBS, USAID etc).

A permanent dialogue continued with different stakeholders from the region: operating RI&TFs and newly established regional networks (Regional Network of Investment Promotion Agencies, etc.) private companies and associations, NGOs and NGO-related organizations (Eco-Social Enterprises Network from SEE, BFPE, SEE Change Net, etc.), discussing the issues and modes of cooperation and developing common activities. The dialogue further widened to include think-tanks from the region and beyond (i.e. LSE Network of SEE researchers) developing and coordinating joint programmes, as well as other EC and IFIs partners. The RCC was also represented at different events relevant for the development of regional cooperation - from think-tank and academic conferences to the EC dialogue with civil society in the region. The RCC Secretariat established and deepened working contacts with regional Civil Society networks in different areas (National Councils of the European Movement from SEE, WB Social Entrepreneurs Network, European Association of Public Service Media in SEE, JHA-related NGOs networks etc) and extended regional coordination with CSO structures.

An ever increasing number of indigenous independent mechanisms and institutions of regional cooperation, not simply in response to pressure and/or financial inducement from outside the region but more and more in response to the authentic needs of the different interest groups and institutions in the region, is an evident proof of a necessity to address a range of problems at the regional level. The RCC's overview covering over 40 regional structures in South East Europe showed that the Western Balkan countries were the only ones participating in almost all of these initiatives. The presence of other countries of the region is significantly lower, indicating that the driving force of reintegration is in fact the Western Balkans strongly supported by the EU and the SEECF.

As expected, some regional initiatives met serious problems regarding financial or political support. Some of these problems are reflection of the global economic crisis, but some are related to relevance, modalities of work and effectiveness of the initiatives themselves.



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPEMENT

2.2

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPEMENT

South East Europe has experienced a fourth year of economic crisis during 2012 and the outlook for 2013 remains negative. The Western Balkans region remains one of the hardest hit regions in Europe with real GDP slipping back into the negative records during 2012, with the projected growth rate of -0.3% at the end of the year.

Labor markets in SEE, traditionally in a precarious situation, have suffered sharply during the past four years. Since 2008, more than 800,000 jobs have been lost in the Western Balkan countries only. The most recent data show unemployment rates hovering at around 22-23% for that region as a whole, which is only a slight decrease compared to 2011. These figures, however, hide considerable differences among countries. Unemployment rates in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Kosovo* have persistently been above 30%. Average youth unemployment in the region is more than twice higher than overall unemployment. Females and low-educated people are also at a higher risk of being unemployed. More than 80% of the unemployed have been without a job for more than a year. Underemployment and informality in the labor market remain important concerns.

To address some of these mounting problems and in accordance with the mandate received from the SEECP and the European Commission, the RCC has further advanced the preparation of a regional strategy - South East Europe 2020. In line with the outcomes of the 2011 Ministerial meeting of the South East Europe Investment Committee (SEEIC), the RCC has over the past year led the countries in the identification of, and agreement to, a number of headline regional targets backed up by national targets. Eleven

specific targets have been identified covering smart, sustainable and inclusive growth along with two additional pillars identified as important by the countries - integrated growth (promoting closer regional integration) and governance for growth (emphasizing the importance of good governance). The selection of targets that span convergence with EU, trade, investment, employment, education and governance was influenced by several factors, including the availability of comparable data to measure progress. However, the political targets are intended to provide commitments and chart out a roadmap for additional work to be done in all sectors covered. The region's Ministers, at their meeting in Tirana, on 9 November 2012, agreed that those regional headline targets should be met by 2020, using 2010 as the basis year. Adoption of the headline targets is very much the first step of a much larger process which will see: (i) the identification of policy measures required at national and regional level, (ii) the development of a comprehensive set of indicators to measure progress in the attainment of these targets, and (iii) agreement on a governance process for the implementation of the SEE 2020 strategy, to be adopted in 2013.



During the past year (and well into 2013), the RCC has been implementing a broad consultative process with different line ministries to identify concrete areas for advancing competitiveness and growth, and promoting employment and social development. A number of areas have been identified, whose outcomes can be strengthened through joint national or regional cooperation actions and which will constitute the building blocks of the different pillars of the SEE 2020 strategy. In the area of employment and social development, these include strengthening linkages between the worlds of education and work, improving labour market governance, facilitating labour mobility and developing social economy initiatives.

The RCC Secretariat has organized series of regional workshops on New Skills for New Jobs in the Western Balkans. Representatives of governments, social partners, and researchers from regional social cohesion network, as well as regional and international organizations, have discussed and exchanged experience on the issue of skills and jobs in the region. A common position has been reached and a regional position paper on skills and jobs has been produced that will serve as a guiding platform for future actions in this field. It highlights the need to increase coordination and synergies among key stakeholders in the education and labour markets, to ensure education, training and lifelong learning become more responsive to the current and future labour market needs, and to improve data and analysis for better evidence based policy making.

Through its activities, the RCC Secretariat has amply emphasized the need to work together to promote policies for balancing labor market flexibility and workers' security, and to ensure inclusive labor markets, strengthen the capacities of labor administrations, ensure participatory social dialogue and develop solid and compatible workforce information systems, as key components of good labour market governance.

Ministries of Labor in the Western Balkan countries have also supported the RCC initiative to further explore the potential prospects and impact of increased cross-border labour mobility in the region. The ability of workers to freely move across the region and across jobs can enable a better use of complementary resources in priority sectors.



The development of social economy has gained considerable importance in the region. Countries have recognized its potential to address social needs, including unemployment, and have initiated setting up of legal frameworks, enabling policies and action, incentives and support mechanisms. The RCC has liaised with relevant regional and national actors to bring forth the establishment of a regional platform for cross-border cooperation on social economy development, which would provide opportunities for strengthening dialogue, sharing knowledge, resources and joint action.

In view of the 2011 Banja Luka Ministerial Pledge to pursue health in all policies, the SEE Health Network (SEEHN) will focus its efforts on developing a concrete action and implementation plan, while actively pursuing, with the support of RCC, the establishment of working relationships of mutual interest with other regional initiatives, including labor and social sectors, education, agriculture, transport, and environment. The seat of the SEEHN secretariat has been inaugurated on 7 March 2013, in Skopje.

Since December 2012, the RCC has started working with the SEEHN to elaborate the health component of the SEE 2020 strategy, as an important pillar of inclusive growth, but also as a horizontal contributor to smart and sustainable growth.

The RCC Secretariat organized a regional meeting of the electronic SEE initiative, as a follow up to the 2011 high level conference for Information Society. The meeting focused on identifying concrete regional actions that can contribute towards the implementation of the electronic SEE Agenda Plus and constitute the region's response to the Europe 2020 strategy, in order to achieve the joint goal of a developed information society in the region.

Going forward, the RCC envisions the SEE 2020 Strategy as the backbone of its activities in the economic and social domains. As the SEE 2020 evolves as a comprehensive development strategy for the region, the benefits of the approach become obvious as: i) a coherent and comprehensive framework for regional cooperation is put forth with clear indicators for measuring progress, ii) a set of policy targets and measures are identified to help countries anchor reform in the long term, and iii) a clear platform is laid out for interaction with donors to the region, with identification of needs and gaps. The successful implementation of the SEE 2020 strategy will require strong political commitment and buy-in from the countries involved, as well as support and backing from the region's main external partners.

ENERGY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

2.3 ENERGY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Regional cooperation in the area of energy and infrastructure continued to be the key topic at various events organised throughout the region, taking into account its role in overall development, but also in the enlargement process. It is mainly taking place under umbrellas of key regional infrastructural cooperation structures: Energy Community and South East Europe Transport Observatory. These structures are well established and strongly supported by both the European Commission and the beneficiaries. During the reporting period, the EU-financed project

Regional Environmental Network for Accession, as well as the Regional Environmental Centre remained the major frameworks for regional environmental cooperation. The RCC Secretariat will continue to complement their activities, enhance coordination and cooperation with and between these regional structures, and promote the need for a more holistic-integrated approach in addressing infrastructure development, in accordance with the expectations of regional stakeholders, especially in the context of development and implementation of the SEE 2020 strategy.



Energy

The continuous RCC's cooperation with the Energy Community (EnC), aiming primarily to plug recognised gaps (cooperation with parliaments, negative environmental impact of energy activities including global pollution and promotion of relevance of "bottom-up" approach for the overall energy sector development by mobilising civil society and local authorities) is expected to expand. It is primarily focused on integrating EnC achievements in the field of energy efficiency and renewable energy sources into the SEE 2020 strategy, and incorporating energy dimension into the wider context of economic development. The RCC Secretariat has been active in promoting sustainable energy development as a key to "green economy" and a crucial prerequisite for bringing the region in line with EU 20-20-20 requirements. It is done primarily through its contribution to the implementation of the Sustainable Energy Development Regional Initiative (SEDRI), jointly launched by the CEI and the RCC. Cooperation and communication with a variety of local, national and regional energy stakeholders and civil society organisations and networks are fundamental for the RCC to appropriately profile its cooperation with the EnC Secretariat and other energy cooperation frameworks, support IPA Multi-beneficiary programming, and ensure adequate inputs to the process of SEE 2020 Strategy development and implementation.

The RCC Secretariat actively participated in the Task Force preparing the Energy Strategy

of the Energy Community (EEnC). Currently focusing on identifying the most appropriate regional energy infrastructure projects of Energy Community interest (PECIs), EEnC will contribute to establishing and taking regionally coordinated actions, in order to attract investment, enhance security of energy supply and improve environmental situation for the benefit of energy consumers in the region.

Despite obvious progress in the implementation of the Energy Community Treaty (ECT), the demonstrated political will of the Contracting Parties (CPs) is not always sufficiently followed by concrete actions in the form of legislative work. The SEE 2020 process could contribute to addressing these issues. Progress in preparing the Third Energy Package transposition and necessary technical assistance in that respect, discussing adoption of the new Energy Efficiency Directive 2012/27/EU in the Energy Community and the need for, and the scope of possible adaptations to the Large Combustion Plants Directive will be in the very focus in the next period.

Appropriate implementation of the ECT by regional countries is of crucial importance in their accession dialogue on the Energy Chapter and in providing support by the EC, donor community and IFIs to the energy sector development. Transferring valuable experience in negotiating Energy Chapter on different levels will be very useful, especially for less advanced CPs, and this process has been initiated by the RCC.



Transport

The development of transport infrastructure considerably influences regional competitiveness. It plays an important role in promoting economic growth and making it more inclusive.

In 2012, the South East Europe Transport Observatory (SEETO) has initiated preparation of a Regional Transport Study as an update of the Regional Balkans Infrastructure Study (REBIS) to be carried out by the World Bank (WB). The outcomes of the Study update should give an impetus to the updating of national transport strategies and to further investments in removal of physical and non-physical barriers to trade and regional production chains. Signing of the Transport Community Treaty (TCT) that was negotiated by the SEE parties is still on hold. The European Commission urges the parties involved to take the necessary steps that will allow for a rapid signing of the Treaty.

The SEE parties continue to participate in, and implement together with the EU Member States and other European countries the European Common Aviation Area Agreement (ECAAA). The countries in the region are expected to form or join Functional Airspaces Blocks (FABs), in order to complete the Single European Sky (SES).

As it is generally understood that an increase in air traffic flows and connectivity in the region would support overall economic development, the RCC Secretariat, with the assistance of the Implementation of Single European Sky

(ISIS) Programme Secretariat, has prepared an application for a feasibility study on air traffic development in SEE. The initiative has been supported by the national administrations, civil aviation authorities and air industry in the region, as well as several NIPACs. It is obvious that there is a strong need of the region for such a project due to a very poor connection between air traffic regional hubs, which increases travel costs and time, thus significantly affecting the level of service quality. Therefore, the RCC intends to continue with the activities on its realization in the coming period. The mentioned study could provide valuable inputs to the aforementioned Regional Transport Study.

As a co-chair of the ISIS Governing Body, the RCC Secretariat continued to support the efforts of national authorities to implement Single European Sky (SES) acquis and committed to providing further political support to the second phase of the ISIS Programme.



The reconstruction and modernization of the railway sector in the region may prove to be a much needed 'jump starter' for reviving many other sectors of national economies, especially at the time of current economic crisis. To that aim, the RCC has launched an initiative to acquire wide political support for the coordinated development of the railway sector and will continue to promote a regional approach towards urgent railway reconstruction and modernisation in SEE in general, and in the Western Balkans in particular. Efficient transport infrastructure is a fundamental challenge for SEE. Current financing for infrastructure remains far below the needed level. Therefore, governments and businesses alike have to find a way to increase efficiency in the movement of people and goods, in order to boost productivity and create conditions for more efficient use of private funds in financing regional infrastructure, and to ensure its financial sustainability.

The RCC will continue working on providing conditions for more intensified regional cooperation in this demanding field. In line with the RCC efforts to promote more actively the Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) and due to scarce budgetary resources, the RCC intends to work on establishing better links with related initiatives, in order to strengthen cooperation between public administration in the region and private sector.

In light of the SEE 2020 strategy, the SEETO has been engaged in the strategy development aimed at raising awareness of the process, and agreeing on operating and governance structures within the following strategy's pillars: integrated, smart and sustainable growth. To that aim, the RCC intends, together with the SEETO, to align current activities in transport sector with the goals defined under the aforementioned pillars of South East Europe 2020.



Environment

In spite of serious environmental problems in SEE, environment and climate change has not yet been perceived as priority area of action. The SEE 2020 strategy is expected to improve the situation and facilitate integrating environmental and climate dimension into other sectoral policies. Vast support is still needed in the region for: strengthening the administrative capacity and inter-institutional cooperation at local and national levels, while strengthening legislative alignment, implementation and enforcement of demanding environmental and climate change legislation, massive investments in the environmental infrastructure and institutional reforms. "Soft" measures, such as awareness-raising, monitoring, networking and information exchange are also needed to complement these efforts.

Focusing on selected priority areas of approximation to the EU environmental and climate acquis, the Regional Environmental Network for Accession (RENA) provided support for capacity building of relevant ministries in transposition and implementation of the *acquis*, strategic planning of environmental policy and investments as well as awareness raising on climate issues. At the ministerial meetings, the RENA and its Working Groups were providing political support, setting priorities and implementing actions in the area of environmental cooperation. The Environment and Climate Regional Accession Network (ECRAN), which is to replace the RENA soon, will strengthen climate change component within the project and introduce climate change adaptation as the topic of high relevance for the climate vulnerable region of SEE, which will help integrating the EU 20-20-20 requirements into the SEE 2020 strategy.

Complementing activities within the RENA framework, the RCC Secretariat, together with the European Parliament, was engaged to ensure better collaboration between parliamentarians, raising their awareness of the need to adopt necessary environmental requirements and standards, facilitate the law making process and raise the abilities to oversee their governments' activities. Taking into account international legally binding obligations of the countries from the region and their climate change vulnerability, the RCC Secretariat recognised the need for enhancing regional cooperation in the field of climate change adaptation and strengthening cooperation between major regional players. It supported activities on establishing and implementing the EU co-funded project - the SEE Forum on Climate Change Adaptation (SEEFCCA) - designed to link national activities on regional level, foster multi-stakeholder partnerships across the region and strengthen capacities of civil society in the region in the area of climate change adaptation, awareness raising and policy dialogue.

The role of the RCC Secretariat in bringing the wider regional perspective, mobilising local authorities and civil society, promoting inter-sectoral cooperation and integrated approach, etc., was recognised in preparation and implementation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EU SDR). There is still room to improve coordination between different initiatives and projects, in order to avoid overlapping and duplication of efforts and save the scarce funding available. The RCC Secretariat supported some of the initiatives and civil society organisations relevant for the EU SDR implementation and contributed to the implementation of their activities. Cooperation with Petersberg Phase II/ Athens Declaration Process in the area of integrated trans-boundary water resources management particularly concerning the water sector climate change adaptation and hydro-potentials use, as well as with the International Commission for the Protection of Danube River (ICPDR) concerning the EU SDR Priority Area Water Quality, will be in the focus in the forthcoming period due to its potential to support SEE 2020 process.

The Network of Associations of Local Authorities in SEE (NALAS), which aims to promote the process of decentralisation and building partnerships in order to contribute to the reconciliation and stabilisation efforts in the region, is another valuable partner of the RCC Secretariat which will continue to

assist the NALAS in establishing better links with the central governments and appropriate EU institutions, particularly in the context of the comprehensive process of the SEE 2020 strategy preparation and implementation.

The International Sava River Basin Commission (ISRBC), primarily dealing with the navigation and environmental aspects, is expanding its scope to crucial aspects of socio-economic development and sustainability. It is a success story of regional cooperation, recognised by the MB IPA Sector Plan on Infrastructure and the EU SDR and related Action Plan. The RCC will continue to cooperate with the ISRBC and support numerous and demanding ISRBC activities in the forthcoming period. It will also facilitate replication of ISRBC achievements to some other basins in the region based on the expressed interest.

The Regional Environmental Center (REC), with its accumulated experience and knowledge in regional environmental cooperation and its strategic goal of promoting and putting into practice governance for sustainability and facilitating the transition towards "green economy", is the key RCC partner in this field. The RCC cooperation with the REC is defined by the Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation between the two organisations and is getting even closer in the context of SEE 2020 strategy and the important role that the REC is to play in the process.



JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS



2.4

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

Regional cooperation in the area of justice and home affairs continued to be one of the main topics of consideration for the countries in SEE. A range of activities were undertaken targeting progress in institutional and legislative reforms, police and prosecutorial cooperation, as well as measures to combat organized crime and corruption, together with concerted efforts of the RCC. They have contributed to raising coherence and complementarities of key regional processes, mechanisms and networks. They also assisted harmonising multiple strategic approaches, strengthening cross-border inter-institutional trust and promoting direct cooperation between the parties concerned.

In the reporting period, a majority of the RCC participants revealed significant vulnerability to organised crime and corruption, and deficit of the rule of law. Advancements in these areas have been achieved in the context of devastating social and economic crisis in the region. Paradoxically, in this difficult time, regional cooperation in the JHA area recorded considerable improvements, despite problems generated by crime phenomenon that

has persisted and even aggravated internationally. Following the obligations laid in the Regional Strategic Document on Justice and Home Affairs and meetings of Steering Group on Regional Strategy (SGSR), the RCC Secretariat finalised the commissioning of the data base application designed to collect and integrate the statistical indicators of the Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism (M&EM). As part of its role, and in accordance with Tirana Declaration of November 2012, the RCC will use the *Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism (M&EM)* and its results in order to follow regional developments in the area of justice and home affairs that are of particular interest, such as fight against organized crime; fight against corruption; migration, asylum and refugees; police and law enforcement cooperation and judicial cooperation. Through the M&EM, the most important indicators were identified, with the intention to clearly portray regional cooperation in listed areas. These areas are strongly connected with regional priorities, in particular related to the governance for growth and inclusive growth pillars of SEE 2020. Results of the monitoring will serve to identify feasible corrective policy actions.



Considerable effort was invested in the development of the new RCC's policy cycle 2014-2016 as well as new strategic framework SEE 2020. Having in mind current regional priorities as well as the interest of the region to revive its economy, ministers of economy defined governance for growth and, therein, a governance more effective by 20%, as an objective for one of the five pillars of the SEE 2020. Inside that structure, effective public services and anti-corruption will be key pillar dimensions developed and implemented in partnership with leading regional initiatives.

Building on the conclusions of the Regional Conference of the Ministers of Interior and Ministers of Justice held in Belgrade on 29-30 November 2011, the RCC has taken a number of concrete steps, including organization and facilitation of several meetings of the Expert Group on Cooperation in Criminal Matters. Its task has been to draft documents with long-term impact on regional cooperation, elaborate options for establishment of regional multilateral instrument, such as regional warrant for deprivation of liberty, taking into consideration developed practice and effects of implementation of the European Arrest Warrant in EU countries, as one of the possible responses to challenges of organized crime in the region. To date, work of this Expert Group recorded only limited results. One of the most important developments related to regional cooperation in this area was the signing of series of bilateral agreements between Western Balkan countries on mutual extradition of own nationals which has been one of the biggest problems in judicial cooperation in the region.

In line with the conclusions of the aforementioned Ministerial meeting, the RCC together with the GIZ, established and facilitated the work of the Expert Group on Cooperation in Civil and Commercial Matters, which resulted in drafting of a regional document similar to the Lugano convention which will be offered for signature later this year.

Continuing efforts in implementation of the UNSCR 1373 (2001) and 1624 (2005) and subsequent resolutions in the region, the RCC together with UN CTED, the SELEC and Government of Turkey organized a workshop for practitioners on the topic of "Countering violent extremism", in order to share respective good practices and challenges in that regard, with the overall goal of enhancing regional cooperation in this area. These counter-terrorism efforts will be continued in the forthcoming period.



Summarizing the implementation of the RCC SWP 2011-2013, it is important to underline that the main achievement in the JHA priority area was the setting up of a comprehensive joint regional platform for cooperation. The Regional Strategic Document (RSD) on JHA 2011-2013 was prepared, adopted and implemented in cooperation with other partners from inside and outside the region. In the course of its preparation, state administrations, regional initiatives and international organizations identified the main regional priorities: fight against trans-border organized crime; fight against corruption; migration and asylum, and, initiation of cooperation in the area of fundamental rights and civil matters. These choices triggered necessary actions which significantly influenced the state of regional cooperation. Following the endorsement of the RSD on JHA at the SEECP meeting of ministers in Budva in March 2011, the RCC through the newly established high level Steering Group on Regional Strategic Document (SGSR) has developed a Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism (M&EM) to assess regional cooperation in the JHA area.

In the area of anti-corruption, the RCC supported the Regional Anti-corruption Initiative (RAI) through facilitation of funding of diverse anti-corruption activities and establishment of the regional

Integrity Expert Network (IEN). Furthermore, anti-corruption efforts facilitated a meeting of the Southeast Europe Law Schools (SEELS) with the Southeast Europe Justice Training Network (SEEJTN), thus allowing for harmonization of anti-corruption curricula of all national judicial training academies with curricula of law faculties in the region. This is a respectable contribution to the establishment of a framework for integrated anti-corruption legal education in SEE.

In the area of migration, the RCC initiated and participated in the establishment of an informal network of the Heads of Consular Departments of the SEECP states. Meetings of the network enabled discussion on illegal migration, consular representation in third countries, cooperation in suppression of "asylum shopping", etc. As a result of these meetings, several bilateral agreements were signed in the field of representation in third countries.

The RCC and the EC shared a commitment in promoting regional initiatives in JHA area and helped, in particular, the Western Balkan countries to increase alignment of their judicial systems and law enforcement structures with international and EU standards.



SECURITY COOPERATION

2.5 | SECURITY COOPERATION

Security cooperation in SEE was stable and continued its positive development in the period 2012-2013. The RCC Secretariat invested considerable efforts in facilitating coordination among regional activities in a more efficient way and developing operational links among them. Through the mapping of regional initiatives (RIs) and their activities, the RCC identified gaps, overlapping and duplication of actions and concentrated on achieving higher synergy. It also identified lessons learned and redefined priorities when necessary.

In addressing security challenges, the RCC Secretariat has ensured the principle of inclusiveness and has received full support of the EU institutions involved in the security area: the European External Action Service, General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, as well as European Commission (DG Enlargement, Unit D.3 Regional Cooperation and Programmes), and from NATO structures: the International Secretariat and International Military Staff in Brussels, as well as the Joint Force Command in Naples.

Moreover, the RCC Secretariat actively participated in regional security cooperation activities, contributing to the process of their streamlining, and had intensive consultations with national institutions and international organizations at political and expert levels. The RCC encouraged RIs to carry out internal strategic reviews, in order to evaluate their added-value in this sector, looking into their contribution to the overall security cooperation process within SEE.

Based on the challenges and achievements in the implementation of the RCC SWP 2011-2013, it is evident that the process of streamlining and avoiding duplication in the activities of the RIs is still at the level of political statements rather than significant practical achievements. In that respect, the RCC will continue to ensure clear and sustained political support from its SEE participants. Better coordination with all international organisations that are implementing programmes in SEE will also remain in focus, in order to achieve more efficient cooperation in the security area.



The RCC was able to motivate countries and international organizations outside the region to look at the SEE security cooperation more from the regional, rather than only from the bilateral/national perspective and to address the security challenges, taking in consideration the whole region. That was achieved without affecting the country-by-country approach, while increasing the significance of the regional perspective.

Synergy in security cooperation during the past year has evolved through the recognition of the structure of decision-making process as a functional mechanism - starting with the RIs at the base and the ministerial meetings at the apex. This approach in decision making and distribution of engagements and commitments between RIs is positioning the SEEC Summit at the top level of the cooperation mechanism, followed by Defense Ministerial (in the SEEC/SEDM format), which formulates the strategic framework of regional cooperation in the security area.

The RCC continued to support development of the SEE Military Intelligence Chiefs (SEEMIC) and SEE National Security Authorities (SEENSA) forums, filling the existing security cooperation gaps. It further enhanced and expanded involvement of NATO and the EU as active partners in SEE regional security cooperation. Both are firmly committed, through their relevant structures, to the SEEMIC and the SEENSA initiatives.

With a full support of the EU Military Intelligence Directorate and NATO's Military Intelligence Division, the fourth conference of the regional mechanism of cooperation among the Chiefs of Military Intelligence (SEEMIC) took place in Sofia, in September 2012. All necessary documents on procedures, terms of reference and Standard Operational Procedures (SOP) were adopted and the first Regional Common Intelligence Analysis was developed. The EU has provided the necessary resources for the establishment of the protected communication links among SEEMIC signatories through an IPA financed project. Also, at the third meeting of the SEE National Security Authorities in May 2013 (as a follow up of the second SEENSA meeting from May 2012), an in-depth analysis on the future common activities is to be developed within the four Thematic Working Groups (Training and Vetting, Security Agreements, Industrial Security and Cyber-Defence). Consultations were carried on for the preparations of the first meetings of the SEE

Chiefs of the Internal Intelligence (SEECIC), the Chairmen of the Security and Defence Committees of the SEE Parliaments and the National Security Advisors to the Presidents and Prime-Ministers in SEE, and ideas on the draft concepts have been exchanged. The RCC Secretariat continued to participate in the work and activities of Southeast Defence Ministerial (SEDM), the SEEC - Forum for Western Balkans Defence Cooperation, and the Adriatic Charter - A-5, as well as in providing direct support to the activities of RACVIAC and the SEESAC.

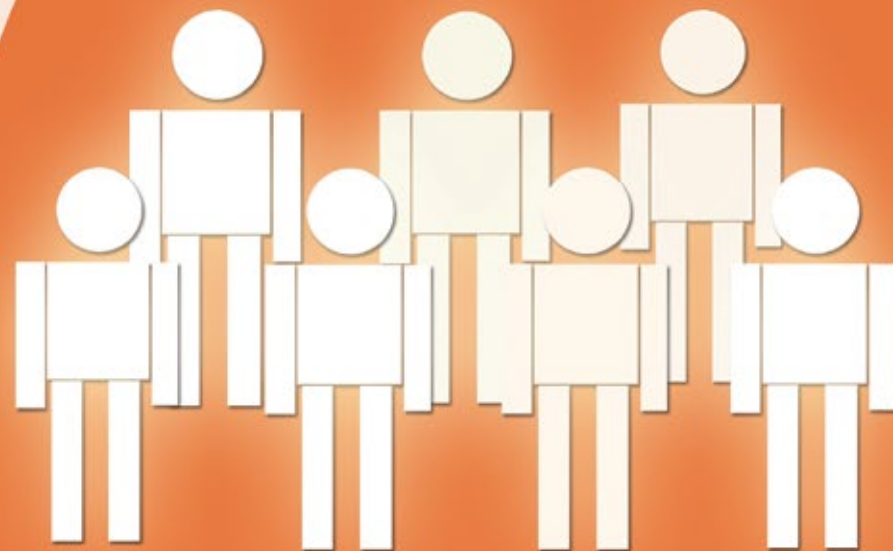


The RCC Secretariat was actively involved in the area of Disaster Risk Reduction and Civil Protection, where due to the seasonal nature of the threats in the region, such as floods and forest fires, it emphasised the opportunities for immediate preparedness measures and mutual cooperation between neighbouring nations. Long standing regional cooperation in disaster preparedness and prevention in SEE has not been developed effectively enough and a unified regional approach to disasters risk reduction (DRR) is still to be achieved.

In this respect, the active coordination with the European Commission through the DG Enlargement and DG ECHO continued in relation

to the strategic planning for IPA Multi-beneficiary, as well as in the implementation of the most important regional projects, in particular those linked to the European Union's mechanisms. Regular consultations with the EU Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response in relation with the SEE activities, in particular those of the DPPI took place in the period covered by this report. The RCC Secretariat actively supported the SEEC C-i-O in the preparation phase of the SEEC Summit, having the main theme related to the Disaster Risk Reduction.

BUILDING HUMAN CAPITAL AND CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES



2.6 | BUILDING HUMAN CAPITAL AND CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

Apart from following the implementation of already started regional programs in the area of building human capital, the RCC Secretariat continued promotion and development of other relevant activities together with national institutions and international partners. Fulfilling its mandate as coordinator of the SEE 2020 strategy, the RCC focused its actions on strengthening interconnection among science, education and economy as well as on unlocking the full potential of cultural and creative industries in the region to boost employment and growth.



Education

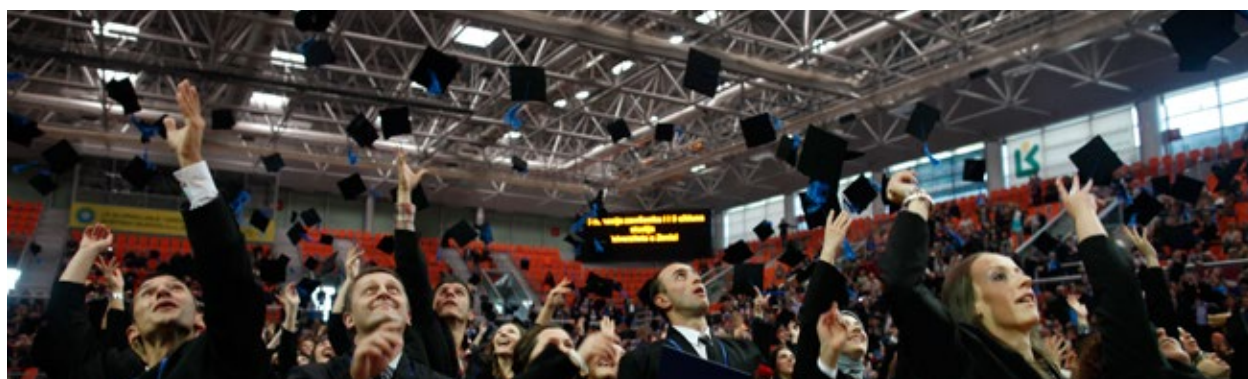
The RCC Secretariat assisted cooperation among the Higher Education (HE) Authorities and Institutions in the region, aiming to build capacities for structural reform in HE and its coherent convergence toward European Higher Education Area. It participated in all important events during the final phase of implementation of the Building Capacity for Structural Reform in Higher Education of Western Balkan Countries (STREW) project, joining representatives of ministries, universities and other relevant institutions in their efforts towards development of the Regional Roadmap for the Promotion of Regional Policy and Structural Reform in Higher Education. The aim of the Regional Roadmap is to promote regional dimension of the HE policy, based on the strategic and long-term vision that resonates nationally, regionally and internationally. It will initiate regional discussions on the exploitation of the strategic opportunities for the higher education sector and support identification of collaborative solutions and formation of strong partnerships in the area.

Strategic partnership with the European Commission, the Regional School for Public Administration (ReSPA) and the European Training Foundation (ETF) was continued and enhanced. The RCC Secretariat is a reliable partner to the EC DG Education and Culture in its efforts to develop the Western Balkans Platform on Education and Training. It played an active role at the Regional Conference organised under the auspices of the Western Balkans Platform on Education and Training, producing a set of recommendations on the basis of shared experiences and good practices from the EU and the Western Balkans for the next Western Balkans Platform Ministerial meeting to be held in May 2013, in Turin.

The RCC Secretariat continued promotion and development of new regional programmes, together with national institutions, regional and international partners, in various thematic areas of concern for the countries from the region. On the basis of expressed interest of the universities from the region, the RCC promoted regional cooperation in doctoral education. Together with the Head Office for South East Europe of the Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education (dv international) and the South East Europe Regional VET Network, the RCC organized regional events on adult education and lifelong learning. These efforts should be further developed and structured under the umbrella of SEE 2020 strategy.

The RCC Secretariat continued cooperation with the existing regional mechanisms - the RCC Task Force Fostering and Building Human Capital (TFBHC) and Education Reform Initiative for South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE). The RCC hosted the 17th Meeting of ERI SEE Governing Board and has gotten its support for the efforts in development of SEE 2020 strategy. The ERI SEE expressed interest in coordinating the education dimension under the smart growth pillar of the strategy.

The RCC fostered cooperation with the Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in South East Europe (CDRSEE), in order to provide a multi-perspective and participative approach for teaching recent history of our region, thus fostering democratic values and reconciliation among young people. The program will be based on the CDRSEE's successful Joint History Project (JHP), which included textbooks in 10 languages, on the earlier history of the region and intensive training for teachers across the Balkans. The aim will also be to increase cooperation among teacher's associations, education ministries and civil society organisations across the region.



Science and Research

Together with its colleagues from national ministries, research institutes and universities, as well as with its international partners such as DG Research and Innovation, the World Bank, Steering platform on Research for the Western Balkans, the WBC.INCO-NET and the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe from Venice, the RCC continued to encourage endeavors aiming to raise the political profile of research and innovation and to strengthen interconnection among science, education system and economy. The Steering Platform meetings emphasized strong correlation between the measures taken at national level to strengthen the research and innovation capacity and successful participation in Horizon 2020. In this context, importance of good synergy between Horizon 2020, the Structural Funds, the Pre-Accession Instrument as well as the Smart Specialization Strategy was emphasized. The Platform welcomed the efforts of the RCC on development of the SEE 2020 strategy, with a view on potential possibilities for replacing the role of Steering Platform and WBC-INCO.NET.

The RCC Secretariat played an active role in the process of development of the Regional R&D Strategy for Innovation in the Western Balkans (RSRDI). The Steering Committee Meetings, organised by the World Bank, agreed on the need for further development of the national reform agendas and joint initiatives, ensuring ownership and coordination with other regional initiatives and strengthening communication and broad-based consultation. Preliminary thoughts were exchanged on the modalities and frameworks for potential follow-up joint investments, first of all between different sectors in the European Commission and possible synergies between National and Multi-beneficiary IPA Funds, as well as on the involvement of other interested parties.



Culture

The RCC Secretariat focused on supporting the RCC Task Force on Culture and Society (TFCS) and on the improvement in establishment of Ljubljana Process National Task Forces and development of Priority Intervention Lists. Simplified procedure for acquiring direct financial assistance was introduced. TFCS website (tfcs.rcc.int) and Collaborative Platform were established. The Communication Strategy and Training Strategy were approved by TFCS. The project "Sustaining the Rehabilitation of Cultural Heritage" has been finalized and the grant contract was signed by the RCC and the EC, in August 2012, allowing for the implementation of this project by the Task Force on Culture and Society to start in October 2012, complementing ongoing activities of the Ljubljana Process. The existing structures and budgets under the ongoing contracts between the EC, the RCC and the CoE would be used for the identification, selection and implementation of the projects, in accordance with the Ljubljana process regulations.

The TFCS aims to provide maximum benefit to its members by implementing Ljubljana Process, but also in development of other result oriented regional programs in the area of culture. The Ministerial Conference "National Museums in South East Europe - Status, Management and Partnerships" was organized in November 2012 in Skopje by the RCC, the Ministry of Culture of the host country and the RCC Task Force on Culture and Society, under the framework of the South-East European Cooperation Process Chairmanship-in-Office of the Former Yugoslav Republic of

Macedonia. The conference, as the first high-political-level event devoted to museums in SEE, gathered ministers of culture from the region, directors of national museums, as well as representatives of the European Commission, the International Council of Museums and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. The Ministers adopted a Joint Statement, setting the ground for establishment of the South East European Museums Network, which will enhance cross-border cooperation between these cultural institutions, aiming to develop projects of regional and international relevance.

The RCC Secretariat has been engaged in the process of exploring the ways for realizing the initiative of establishment of the Regional Film Fund. The initiative follows the interest the countries of SEE expressed in the Declaration of the Annual Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Culture of South East Europe (CoMoCoSEE), held in Belgrade in April 2012 and the conclusions of the Regional Film Forum, held during the Sarajevo Film Festival in July 2012. The establishment of the Regional Film Fund would complement available funds at national and the European levels (EURIMAGES, NORDISK FILM & TV FOND), with the aim of strengthening cross-border market for audio-visual works in SEE. It would also channel public funding into independent audio-visual projects from the region with a view to creating multiplier effect for generating further investment, thus producing the potential for larger returns from this growing market, strengthening the companies and achieving sustainability for the sector.

PARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION



2.7 | PARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION

The parliamentary cooperation in SEE witnessed good progress and the RCC Secretariat has continued to be actively involved in promoting parliamentary cooperation both in SEE and Western Balkans formats by strengthening the parliamentary dimension of the work of the SEECP, and developing the Cetinje Parliamentary Forum for enhancing coordination of parliamentary activities in the Western Balkans, through establishment of a sustainable Secretariat.

The RCC Secretariat was involved in assisting the SEECP in developing the parliamentary dimension (PD) of its work, supporting the implementation of the Final Declaration of the 8th Conference of the SEECP Speakers of Parliaments. It has actively

participated in all meetings of the SEECP Parliamentary Dimension Working Group, with discussions focusing on potential model of SEECP PD institutionalization: establishment of the SEE Parliamentary Assembly or establishment of the SEECP Parliamentary Conference. During three meetings, the discussions continued with a view to find the most appropriate formula for transforming the SEECP PD into a SEECP Parliamentary Assembly. The RCC Secretariat has also assisted in preparing a Comprehensive Report with analysis of the existing proposals. The Consolidated Version of this Comprehensive Report will be presented to the 10th Conference of the SEECP Speakers of Parliaments, at the end of May 2013.





The RCC Secretariat participated in the International Conference “15 Years of SEECP Parliamentary Dimension - Past, Present and European Future of Region”, organized by the Parliament of the SEECP C-i-O, in October 2012, in Skopje, to mark the 15th anniversary of institutionalized parliamentary cooperation in SEE. The main aim of the event was to give an overview of the beginning, achievements, challenges and perspective of the inter-parliamentary cooperation in the region, in the context of European integration processes.

Regarding parliamentary cooperation in the Western Balkans format, the RCC Secretariat is pursuing steps in developing the project: “Parliamentary Cooperation in the Western Balkans and Turkey - Support to the Cetinje Parliamentary Forum”. The project aimed to strengthen the role and effectiveness of Parliaments in the region in the EU integration process. Access to

public documents is finalized and consultations were held with DG Enlargement and Montenegrin representatives regarding optimal model for project contracting and respective budgeting.

The RCC Secretariat was actively involved in organizing the Seventh Conference of the European Integration Parliamentary Committees of States participating to the Stabilization and Association Process (COSAP), hosted by the Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in March 2013. The role of parliaments in driving forward the European integration related reform agenda and the key role of European Integration Committees in this process, necessity to strengthen institutions, the rule of law and the priority to deal with justice and legal reforms, European integration and the need to focus on standards and approximation of legislation, and consolidation of COSAP network in accordance with its Rules of Procedure were among issues emphasized during this event.

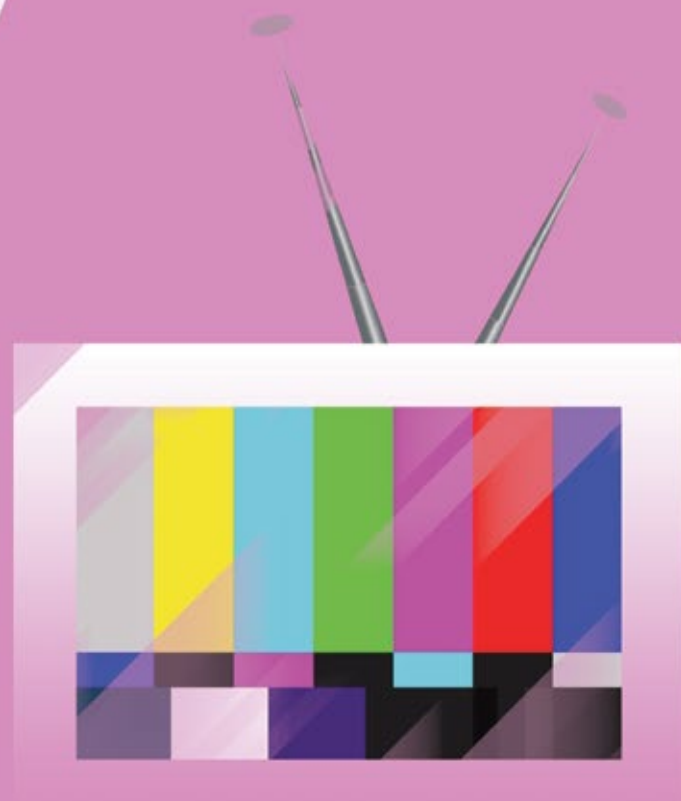
The RCC Secretariat has continued a fruitful cooperation with the European Parliament (EP) in preparing and jointly organizing events in the region. The RCC has assisted the EP in targeting key experts on regional thematic issues and also provided participation of RCC experts on various thematic meetings involving either MPs or parliamentary staff from the Parliaments of the Western Balkans.

The RCC Secretariat attended the Meeting of the European Parliament with National Coordinators for Parliamentary Cooperation in the Western Balkans and Turkey, for the assessment of the parliamentary seminars in 2012 and the Support Programme for WB parliaments during 2013. Representatives of EP from Directorate D, Democracy Support Directorate, and the Institutional Cooperation Unit expressed satisfaction regarding the cooperation with the RCC Secretariat in organizing common activities in the region and readiness to continue with this cooperation in the future.

The RCC Secretariat has not only forged cooperation with the regionally-led initiatives, networks and international organizations supportive of the parliamentary cooperation in SEE, but also with individual parliaments in the region as well. There is an agreement that parliamentary cooperation in SEE needs to be further streamlined and directed towards strengthening capacities of main legislative bodies in fulfilling their various important roles in state governing systems. Regional stakeholders - National Parliaments, SEECP C-i-O, the RCC, the Regional Secretariat for Parliamentary Cooperation, the COSAP, and international partners, like the European Parliament and the European Commission, are expected to join efforts on developing more realistic and result oriented approach among main legislative bodies of the countries in Western Balkans and SEE.



MEDIA DEVELOPMENT



2.8 MEDIA DEVELOPMENT

The economic and financial crisis has had its consequences on the media in SEE as well. Newspapers have dropped sales or were forced to shut down, advertising has become scarcer, and subscription fees have become more difficult to collect. Under such circumstances, freedom of expression has become even more difficult, hindering the development of independent media. The EC in its Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2012-2013 has acknowledged that “strengthening freedom of expression and independence of the media remains a major challenge” and will be given prominence in the accession process⁵. It has become apparent that media freedom, independence, sustainability

and pluralism are still at stake and require an increased support and engagement.

Deepening a regional dialogue between state actors and the media is the niche the RCC considers of great importance for strengthening freedom of expression in SEE. Particular attention is paid to public service media, given their role in a society. By facilitating networking through the European Association of Public Service Media in South East Europe (EAPSM in SEE), and capacity building of media professionals in South East Europe through the Academy on Media Law, the RCC has contributed to the improvement of media cooperation in the region.



⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2012/package/strategy_paper_2012_en.pdf, pp. 4-6



The RCC Secretariat has actively supported the EAPSM in SEE and to that effect worked with the EC and the European Broadcasting Union (EBU). As a result of two-year EBU/RCC advocacy, in July 2012, a five-year partnership agreement was signed between the EU and the EBU on enabling the democratic role of public service media in countries covered by the EU enlargement policy.

The First Academy on Media Law in South East Europe was held in Zagreb in June 2012, under the auspices of the RCC Secretariat and with support of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation,

the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, and the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina. The implementing partners were the EAPSM in SEE and ARTICLE 19: Defending freedom of expression and information. The five-day Academy, the first of a kind in the region, gathered media experts from all countries of SEE who discussed safeguarding media freedom by enhancing regional cooperation and by building up capacity of media lawyers. The participants formulated recommendations for legal reforms based on the best practices in the region and in line with international and European media standards.

The RCC Secretariat, together with the European Commission and the Central European Initiative (CEI), has facilitated preparation of a documentary series *How do I see my neighbour*, to stimulate understanding, dialogue, reconciliation and good neighbourly relations in SEE through the public service media. The documentary was produced by nine public service broadcasters from SEE, to be aired in April/May 2013.

The RCC Secretariat co-organized, with the RACVIAC, the EAPSM in SEE and the Croatian Radio-Television, a conference on investigative journalism and data protection. It discussed ways for increasing regional cooperation through dialogue and knowledge transfer, by disseminating international standards related to investigative journalism and data protection, and building a more open, transparent and stable environment in the region.

Through its SWP 2014-16, the RCC will continue to contribute to these developments in an even more strategic and targeted manner, linking activities in the media field with SEE 2020 strategy goals to the benefit of societies and people in the region, and their faster integration into the EU.



A sunset over a valley with a large white number 3 on the left and a person's silhouette inside it. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a golden glow over the clouds and the valley below. The number 3 is a large, white, stylized graphic element. Inside the bottom loop of the 3, there is a silhouette of a person standing and looking out over the landscape. The text "The Way Ahead" is written in a white, sans-serif font, positioned to the right of the top part of the number 3.

The
Way
Ahead

The main focus of the RCC Secretariat in the period ahead will be the accomplishment of goals of the RCC SWP 2011-2013 and the beginning of implementation of the SWP 2014 - 2016.

With its new SWP 2014-2016, the RCC assumes greater responsibility in fostering longer-term planning and vision building in regional cooperation, thus also reflecting the growing capacities of its main stakeholders. This strategy is designed to be a platform supporting emergence and implementation of future strategies, in view of the 2020 horizon, by which time the countries in the region should be sufficiently prepared for EU accession. In that context, South East Europe 2020 strategy, whose development is being coordinated by the RCC, lies in the heart of RCC's further activities. This regional response to *Europe 2020* is put forward by the countries, to help anchor their reform efforts, support the EU accession process and focus joint action on increasing competitiveness and creating jobs.

The RCC's impact could be effected only through widely accepted and supported regional platforms in different areas developed by the RCC, by other regional structures, or jointly. In the period ahead, in order to ensure strengthened national ownership of regional cooperation, it remains crucial for countries to make cooperation

initiatives with inherent components of national strategies and priority actions, while capitalizing on the potential that exchange of knowledge and information offers.

In preparing the next RCC multi-annual strategy and developing SEE 2020 strategy, the RCC Secretariat is upgrading relations with other RI&TFs on the programme and project basis through coordinated programming and defining legal framework for joint actions. Coordination and streamlining of RCC Secretariat activities have been further advanced, and an open debate on prioritizing its activities is regularly held, especially related to the SEE 2020 framework.

Regional structures will be further involved in this process and the RCC will play a key coordinating and streamlining role in integrating different regional and national strategies into the wider context of SEE 2020. In order to fulfill this role, the RCC is setting up a broad coordination mechanism, a comprehensive monitoring system and a clear governance structure. In addition to providing support to the governments, the RCC will work together with the established and recognised regional structures and other partners in a particular field and, where necessary, undertake additional activities to address identified gaps.

Although the work of RIs is mostly aligned with the priorities of Europe 2020, as the main European framework for growth, they will also benefit from a strengthened regional governance mechanism where systematic benchmarking, peer reviews, monitoring, and reporting would be executed on a regular basis. Associating the regional initiatives further with Europe 2020 (in both policy objectives and governance principles) could help increase effectiveness of key regional structures, provide better insight at the level of policy development in countries and in the region, secure enhanced translation of regionally-agreed reforms to national levels, and finally, prepare countries for obligations of membership.

The RCC is ready to assume its new role in the programming and monitoring of implementation of the IPA II. The RCC is expected to play an important consultative role in preparing Country and Multi-Country Strategy Papers. The SEE 2020 and other regional strategies will be used as background documents for the planning phase in preparing IPA II documents. In defining the structure of the Common Strategic Framework, the SEE 2020 Agenda will serve as the link between the political agenda and the specific objectives of the IPA in particular related to the economic, social and territorial development and regarding strengthening of regional integration and territorial cooperation.

Given the focus of the new multi-beneficiary IPA programme to respond to a common strategic framework with clear results and impacts, it was noted that the IPA II programme development will track the process of the development and implementation of the SEE 2020 strategy, in an effort to align the two as much as possible. Furthermore, the Social Agenda 2020 is expected to respond directly to one of the new priority policy areas of MB IPA, which focuses on employment, social policy and human resources.

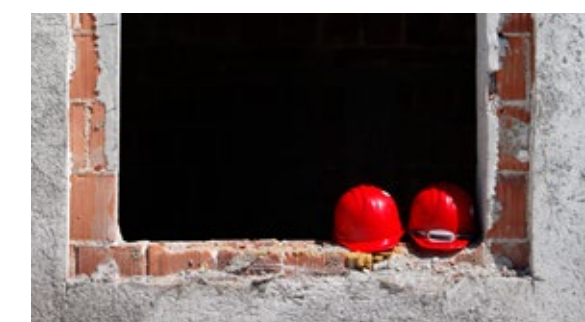
One of the key messages of the IPA II initial documents raises high expectations in that respect: "Ownership and inclusiveness will be essential guiding principles in this planning and programming process, and the involvement of regional partners and other stakeholders will

represent an important success factor"⁶. It is requested that the IPA II Country Strategy Papers should outline which sectors would benefit from the IPA support, relevant sector or regional (e.g. SEE 2020) strategies already developed (or sectors for which such a strategy needs to be developed), efforts by the beneficiary country, including non-financial activities, and relevant activities by other donors and international players (notably IFIs).

In assuming an enhanced role in monitoring regional cooperation, besides its Annual Report, the RCC Secretariat is expected to contribute more to the Enlargement Strategy Report as well as Country Progress Reports. The already developed monitoring tools, like M&EM for monitoring cooperation in the area of JHA, SEE 2020 monitoring mechanism with annual monitoring cycle and indicators and monitoring mechanisms developed by other regional organizations will improve general overview of the advancement of regional cooperation and fulfillment of regionally defined objectives.

The RCC's political role in coordinating multinational programmes between its participants will be primarily exerted through the SEECF format, the SEEC and the SEE 2020 Coordination Mechanism. It will also require close cooperation with the EU institutions.

Enhanced communication will be an important tool in fulfilling objectives of this strategy. Its goal is to highlight the RCC's mission, support achievement of the organization's goals, and increase impact of results of its activities, by interacting with the media on a regular basis and by developing and strengthening relationships with governments, public officials, opinion-makers, diplomats, international community, think-tanks, academia, business community, etc.



⁶Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (2014-2020), Roadmap for planning and programming, EC, DG Enlargement, 14 January 2013, p.5

ILO	International Labour Organization
IOE	International Organization of Employers
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IOs	International Organizations
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
IRI	Investment Reform Index
IRF	International Road Federation
IRTAD	International Road Traffic and Accident Database
ISIS	Implementation of Single European Sky in South East Europe
ISRBC	International Sava River Basin Commission
ITF	International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance
ITUC	International Trade Union Confederation
JPM	Joint Parliamentary Meeting
KOGSEB	Small and Medium - sized Enterprise Development Administration of Turkey
LSE	London School of Economics
MARRI	Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative
MB IPA	Multi-Beneficiary Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
MCAASEES	Marshall Center Alumni Association for Southeast European Security
ME CAA	Montenegrin Civil Aviation Agency
MIDWEB	Migration for Development in the Western Balkans
MIPD	Multi Indicative Planning Document
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MONEYVAL	Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
M&EM	Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism
NALAS	Network of Associations of Local Authorities of SEE
NARIC	National Academic Recognition Information Centres
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NI-CO	Northern Ireland Cooperation Overseas
NIPACs	National IPA Coordinators
NOS	NATO Office of Security
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OLAF	European Antifraud Office
OCTA	Organized Crime Threat Assessment for South East Europe
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OSINT	Open Source Intelligence
PCC Secretariat	Police Cooperation Convention Secretariat
PE	Private Equity
PFS	Partners for Financial Stability
PHLG	Permanent High Level Group
PIDIN	Partnership for Improvement of Danube Infrastructure and Navigation
PPP	Public Private Partnership
PSO	Peace Support Operations
RACVIAC	Centre for Security Cooperation

RAI	Regional Anticorruption Initiative
RCC	Regional Cooperation Council
RCC TF FBHC	RCC Task Force Fostering and Building Human Capital
RCI	Regional Competitiveness Initiative
REC	Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe
RENA	Regional Environmental Network for Accession
RES	Regional Energy Strategy
ReSPA	Regional School of Public Administration
RI&O	Regional Initiatives and Organizations
RI&TFs	Regional Initiatives and Task Forces
RIs	Regional initiatives
RNIPA	Regional Network of Investment Promotion Agencies
RSA	Road Safety Audits
RSD	Regional Strategic Document
RSRDI	Regional Strategy for Research and Development for Innovation in Western Balkans
RSI	Road Safety Inspection
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)
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SECE CRIF	South East and Central European Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility
SECI	Southeast European Cooperative Initiative
SECI Centre	Southeast European Cooperative Initiative, Regional Centre for Combating Organized Crime
SEDM	South East Europe Defence Ministerial
SEDRI	Sustainable Energy Development Regional Initiative
SEE	South East Europe
SEEC	South East Europe Clearing House
SEECIC	South East European Counter-Intelligence Chiefs Forum
SEECEL	South East Europe Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning
SEECPP	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
SEEHN	SEE Health Network
SEEIC	South East Europe Investment Committee
SEEJTN	South East Europe Judicial Training Network
SEELS	South East European Law School Network
SELEC	Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre
SEEMIC	South East Europe Military Intelligence Chiefs
SEE MoD-GS	South East Europe Ministries of Defence and General Staffs
SEENSA	National Security Authorities of South East Europe Countries
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
SES	Single European Sky
SEETO	South-East Europe Transport Observatory
SGRS	Steering Group on Regional Strategy
SIDA	Swedish Development Agency
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise
SMEM	Serbian Ministry of Energy and Mining
SOP	Standard Operational Procedure
SPMU	Strategic Police Matters Unit
SSR	Security Sector Reforms
STREW	Structural Reform in Higher Education in Western Balkans Countries
SWG RRD	Standing Working Group on Regional Rural Development
SWP	Strategic Work Programme
SWEROAD	Swedish National Road Consulting
TACSO	Technical Assistance for Civil Society Organizations
TCT	Transport Community Treaty
TEN-T	Trans-European Transport network
TF	Task Force
TFBHC	Task Force Fostering and Building Human Capital
TFCS	Task Force on Culture and Society
ToR	Terms of Reference
Treptower Group	Western Balkan Initiative on the Police Developmental Aid
UNCTED	United Nations Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICRI	United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute
UNISDR	United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
UNMIK	United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VC	Venture Capital
VET Network	Vocational education and training
WB	World Bank
WBC.INCO-NET-WB	Information Office of the Steering Platform on Research for the Western Balkans
WBIF	Western Balkans Investment Framework
WBPN	Western Balkans Prosecutor Network
WG	Working Group
WHO	World Health Organization
WINPRO	Witness Protection in the Fight against Serious Crime and Terrorism
WMO	World Meteorological Organization
WPON	Women Police Officers Network

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UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
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*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



RegionalCooperationCouncil

*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*

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