

BiH – RCC – Svilanovic – interview

IMPORTANCE OF "SOUTH EAST EUROPE 2020" STRATEGY. Goals: employment growth rise by at least 5%, increase of mutual trade by 230%, GDP rise from the current 38% to 46% of EU average...

Interviewed by: Bernard Milosevic

Sarajevo, 31 January /SRNA/ - The Regional Cooperation Council /RCC/ prepares a development strategy "South East Europe 2020 (SEE 2020)", which is focused on economic and social growth, RCC Secretary General, Goran Svilanovic said.

"The Strategy should be adopted by ministers of economy late this year. It will be compatible with Europe 2020 Strategy, but it is still unique for the region“, Svilanovic explains in the interview for Srna.

He notes that this Strategy is developed in the midst of a large economic and financial crisis, which made lives of the poorest impossible and practically destroyed the middle class in the region.

Svilanovic points out that ministers of economy from the region gave “green light” to the SEE 2020 Strategy development and set goals they want to achieve together.

"We are here to do everything we can to help them be successful in achieving these goals. Let me mention the most important ones: employment growth by at least 5%, increase in mutual trade by 230%, region’s GDP rise from the current 38% to 46% of EU“, he said.

In order to make this happen, production, trade, investments and education must be improved, and national governments in the region must be far more efficient. "We will continue supporting infrastructure development, combat against organised crime and corruption, cooperation in the areas of security, science, culture, parliaments and media“, Svilanovic announced.

As for RCC’s 2013 budget, Svilanovic explained that it amounted to some three million EUR, but that the Council also managed funds exceeding one million EUR per year, which is not included in the master budget. These funds are intended for specific projects, such as the South-East European Investment Committee, encouraging female entrepreneurship and Task Force on Culture and Society.

"The Investment Committee is the basis for launching of our main project: South East Europe 2020 Strategy for long-term development in the region. This project will consolidate the majority of our activities, in order to use all available financial and human resources in the most efficient way for increase of our region's competitiveness", Svilanovic explains.

He reminds that regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations were consisting parts of the EU Stabilisation and Accession Agreement that was signed by countries from the region.

"Regional cooperation is an important membership precondition, which is evaluated through regular EC's progress reports. The Regional Cooperation Council, in cooperation with the European Commission plays an important role in preparing these reports and in evaluating the progress of each country in the accession process", Svilanovic told Srna.

Svilanovic wants to achieve maximum level of consideration of region's interests in the EU during the preparation of a new strategy for financing development through pre-accession funds, the so-called IPA 2, which is underway in Brussels these days.

Svilanovic expects that relations within the region will move forward, because it is the only possible path. As examples, he mentioned a recent visit of Croatian Prime Minister Zoran Milanovic to Belgrade, yesterday's visit of Serbian Prime Minister Ivica Dacic to Sarajevo, and the announced visit of the Chairman of BiH Council of Ministers, Vjekoslav Bevanda to Belgrade next week.

"All these meetings, in addition to their symbolic value and their role in raising the level of confidence and friendship between nations, also have an increasingly pronounced economic element", Svilanovic says.

He emphasized that ministers of judiciary and internal affairs of countries from the region committed to jointly combat organized crime at the regional level, and that the level of scientific and cultural cooperation was also on an upward trend, as well as media cooperation.

When it comes to the role of Croatia as a future EU member, Svilanovic feels that it will be very important in the region, particularly because its experience from the accession process is very useful for other countries pursuing the same goal.

Svilanovic is confident that Croatia's EU accession will additionally strengthen the bond between the region and the EU, which will help other countries from South East Europe to become successful EU members as soon as possible, with the highest quality preparation.

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