Stefan Dehnert / Dane Taleski (Eds)

Monitoring Regional Cooperation in South East Europe

Contents

List of Abbreviations

BD	Brčko District
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CEFTA	Central European Free Trade Agreement
COE	Council of Europe
CPESSEC	Centre of Public Employment Services of Southeast European Countries
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DIACA	Department of Internal, Administrative Control and Anticorruption
DPA	Democratic Party of the Albanians
DUI	Democratic Union for Integration
ECAA	European Common Aviation Area
EPAP	European Partnership Action Plan
EU	European Union
EUOK	European Union Office in Kosovo
EUSR	European Union Special Representative
FBiH	Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
FRY	Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDZ	Croatian Democratic Union
ILECU	International Law Enforcement Cooperation Unit
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession
MAI	Migration and Asylum Initiative
MARRI	Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOI	Ministry of Interior
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NES	National Employment Service
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OFA	Ohrid Framework Agreement
RAI	Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative
RCC	Regional Cooperation Council
RESPA	Regional School of Public Administration
RHDC	Regional Health Development Centre
RP-SSCSSR	Regional Programme on Social Security Coordination and Social Security Reforms in South-East Europe
RRI	Regional Return Initiative
RS	Republika Srpska
SAA	Stabilisation and Association Agreement
SAPD	Stabilization and Association Process Dialogue
SDSM	Social Democratic Union of Macedonia
SECI	Southeast European Cooperative Initiative
SEEHN	South-Eastern Europe Health Network
SEEHN	Southeast European Cooperative Initiative/Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre
SEETO	South East Europe Transport Observatory
SELEC	Southeast European Cooperative Initiative/Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre
SISP	Social Institution Support Programme
SPAI	Stability Pact Anticorruption Initiative
UNMIK	United Nations Mission in Kosovo
UNSCR	United Nation Security Council Resolution
VMRO-DPMNE	Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity
WHO	World Health Organization
WPON	Women Police Officer Network in South East Europe

Introduction

Dane Taleski*

Currently, it is difficult to understand and to assess the progress made in regional cooperation in South East Europe. The Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), launched in 2008 as a successor to the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, focuses on promoting and enhancing regional cooperation in the Western Balkan region. RCC annual reports show that regional cooperation is improving in relation to economic and social development, infrastructure and energy, justice and home affairs, security cooperation, building human capital and other cross-cutting issues (RCC 2011), as well as, more and recently, media cooperation (RCC 2012). According to the RCC, by 2010 49 regional initiatives and task forces had been established (RCC 2010).

However, in many cases the agreements on cooperation appear to be merely declarative, while activities are difficult to quantify and qualify. At the same time, the knowledge of stakeholders, especially at national level, about the progress of regional cooperation is meagre. Throughout this volume this fact turns up in the different country chapters. Public officials in various South East European countries do not seem to fully grasp the magnitude and importance of regional cooperation. In some cases officials from different line ministries, or other public institutions, from the same country involved in the same regional initiative do not fully understand their role in the process or do not make concerted efforts to improve regional cooperation.

There is a lack of expertise and up-to-date, comprehensive studies concerning regional cooperation in South East Europe. RCC reports provide a concise overview of the state of regional cooperation, but do not offer an in-depth analysis that shows the weakness and strengths of the process. Some of the previous research in assessing the state of regional cooperation is now outdated (Anastasakis and Bojicic Dzelilovic 2002; Grupe and Kušić 2005; Delevic 2007). On the other hand, some research has a very narrow focus, looking at a single issue (Stubos and Tsikripis 2008), while other research tries to conceptualize the process of transnationalism in the Western Balkans (Oktem and Bechev 2006). Some authors posit the importance of international actors, notably the EU, in fostering regional cooperation in the Western Balkans (Bechev 2006; Bastian, 2008, 2011). There is an increasing understanding, however, that regional cooperation in South East Europe is a multi-actor and a multi-level process in the direction of open regionalism in South East Europe (Stubbs and Solioz 2012).

In general, studies of regions were at first driven by functionalist assumptions, based on the empirical reality of transnational cooperation, but then moved to conceptualizations of what constitutes a region as a social construction (Breslin and Higgott 2000). The level of analysis is usually at the regional level and sometimes comparative studies are carried out juxtaposing one region to another (for

---

* The author is Executive Director of the Institute for Social Democracy »Progress« in Skopje, Macedonia. He was coordinator of the regional research project »Monitoring of Regional Cooperation in SEE«.

example, NAFTA and MERCUSOR). Studies of regions are mostly grounded in concepts from political economy, forming a theoretical approach known as 'new regionalism' (Marchand et al. 1999). This theoretical approach distinguishes between the dimensions of regional cooperation (that is, whether it is a trade bloc, monetary regionalism, economic convergence or security communities), the actors involved in cooperation (in other words, whether the actors are states or political or business leaders) and the level of cooperation. At the same time, comparative studies of regional cooperation show that institutional homogeneity at state level needs to be taken into account (Feng and Genca 2003). That is to say that the functioning of national-level institutions is an important factor in accessing the state of regional cooperation.

The Western Balkans is a socially constructed region, where the process of regional cooperation is moderately institutionalized under the umbrella of RCC. However, it is unclear how regional cooperation functions in practice. What is even more unclear is how state-level institutions behave in the process of regional cooperation. While some reports and studies do give information on regional-level processes, there is a lack of empirical data about the national-level institutions.

The main idea behind our research was to provide an evaluation of the existing initiatives and policies for regional cooperation in South East Europe. The research was focused on the national level and tried to measure the impact of the regional-level initiatives and policies on national-level institutions and processes. The main research question was, how do the existing regional initiatives in South East Europe work in practice at the national level in the countries involved?

Further questions include:

1. What effects, if any, have regional initiatives and policies had at national level? What kind of impact have regional initiatives and policies had on national-level institutions or regulations?
2. How do individual states in South East Europe contribute to regional integration policies?

The research did not focus on the level of regional integration. It was assumed that a high level of regional integration will be the outcome of successful regional initiatives and policies. The research also did not focus on the preconditions for further integration. Due to the existing initiatives and policies it was assumed that the minimum preconditions for regional cooperation were already met. The research was not intended to map the activities of single states in terms of regional integration. It was assumed that preferences for regional integration vary across the region. However the research tried to give an overview of how national states are coping with the existing initiatives and policies for regional cooperation.

The aim of the study was to monitor the building and performance of national-level capacities for regional cooperation. Furthermore, this study aims to increase the national-level awareness of regional cooperation initiatives and to push forward the processes of regional cooperation. The study's target audiences include national-level actors and relevant stakeholders, but also the international actors and donors that support the process of regional cooperation. We believe that »better monitoring has the capacity to make integration policies more effective and integration processes more transparent, involving higher degrees of participation and legitimacy, and therefore making the process more sustainable« (De Lombaerde et al. 2008).

Research Design and Methodological Approach

The research study was designed on the basis of theoretical assumptions from established regional studies (Breslin and Higgott 2000). The methodological concept and approach was influenced by the work of other scholars who have proposed indicators for measuring regional cooperation (De Lombaerde et al. 2008; De Lombaerde and Van Langenhove 2005). This study looks at policy areas where there are initiatives for regional cooperation. Indicators were constructed to measure the capacities and performance of national-level institutions. This framework gives a possibility for replication and the tracking of progress in the future. The analysis starts from the signing of the agreement/treaties for regional initiatives and follows their implementation and functioning at national level. The country studies are practically monitoring reports on the implementation of the existing initiatives for regional cooperation.

The policy areas for monitoring were chosen following neo-functionalist assumptions. Neo-functionalism is one of the leading theories explaining processes of regional cooperation and integration. Their main assumption is that regional cooperation flows from policy areas of »low« politics to policy areas of »high« politics. For example, the EU has developed from a community for coal and steel, building on the common market to a Common European Security and Defence Policy.

Regional cooperation in South East Europe already exists in several policy areas: economic and social development, infrastructure and energy, justice and home affairs, security, education, science, culture and parliamentary cooperation. Following the neo-functionalist assumption the choice was made to juxtapose the policy area of social development with the policy area of justice and home af-

fairs (rule of law issues). In that respect one would regard the area of justice and home affairs as an area of »high« politics, while social development would be a policy area of »low« politics. However, one should bear in mind that social development tends to be a high priority in »low« politics, while justice and home affairs is a lower priority of »high« politics (in other words, security, sovereignty or international relations would be the highest priorities of high politics).

From each policy area three existing regional initiatives were chosen for monitoring.

I. Justice and home affairs – rule of law regional cooperation initiatives:
1. Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre (SELEC) (formerly known as SECI). More information at: www.secicenter.org/m105/Home
2. The Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative (MARRI). More information at: www.marri-rc.org/
3. Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative (RAI). More information at: www.rai-see.org

II. Social development initiatives:
1. Regional Programme on Social Security Coordination and Social Security Reforms in South-East Europe (RP-SSCSSR). More information at: www.coe.int/t/dg3/sscssr/default_en.asp
2. The Centre of Public Employment Services of Southeast European Countries (CPESSEC). More information at: www.cpessec.org/
3. South-Eastern Europe Health Network (SEEHN). More information at: seehnsec.blogspot.com/p/about-see-health-network.html

There is diversity among the chosen initiatives. Some were started bottom up, as initiatives of

Table 1. Overview of countries' membership of regional cooperation initiatives

Initiatives:	ALB	BIH	CRO	MKD	MNG	KOS	SER
SECI/SELEC	X	X	X	X	X		X
MARRI	X	X	X	X	X		X
RAI	X	X	X	X	X		X
RP-SSCSSR	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
CPESSEC		X	X	X	X		X
SEEHN	X	X	X	X	X		X

national-level stakeholders (CPESSEC), others came together with the development of regional cooperation (SECI/SELEC), while others were started top down, as initiatives of the EU and the Council of Europe (COE) (RP-SSC-SSR). Some of these initiatives started back in 1999, while others are more recent. Also, not all countries fully participate in all initiatives. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia are part of all of them, while Albania does not participate in the Centre of Public Employment Services of Southeast European Countries. On the other hand, Kosovo is only part of the Regional Programme on Social Security Coordination and Social Security Reforms in South-East Europe. An overview of the membership of Western Balkan countries in the regional cooperation initiatives is given in Table 1.

Regardless of the diversity among the initiatives, all of them require national-level capacities to sustain and improve regional cooperation. Some structures at the national level need to be set up. Monitoring focused on

Table 2. Overview of the initiatives and dimensions chosen for analysis

Initiatives:	Implementation	Local Ownership	Gender Issues
SECI/SELEC			
MARRI			
RAI			
RP-SSCSSR			
CPESSEC			
SEEHN			
Outcome	Monitoring report of national-level capacities and performances		

those structures and their performance.

Three dimensions were identified for evaluation: (i) level of implementation, (ii) local ownership and (iii) gender. These dimensions apply only at the national level. The state of affairs in each of these dimensions should show the state of national-level capacities and performance. Table 2 gives an overview of the initiatives and dimensions chosen for analysis.

Implementation is regarded as a static dimension. It denotes the existence of country-level structures and capacities developed to sustain the regional initiative. In that sense, one expects that such capacities started to be built at a certain point and that this process should finish at some point. To measure the level of implementation the following indicators were chosen: legislation, administrative structures, technical infrastructure and practices and procedures.

Local ownership is a dynamic dimension. It denotes the capacities and state of performance of national institutions in the regional initiatives. One expects that if there is an increase in local ownership then the country will be better prepared for activities in the regional initiative. To measure the level of local ownership the following indicators were chosen: resources, agenda setting, know-how, the eagerness of the state and decision making.

Gender constitutes a cross-cutting dimension. It denotes the awareness and willingness at national level to promote inclusion of women and gender-related issues. To measure the level of gender issues the following indicators were chosen: inclusion of women and gender mainstreaming.

Table 3 summarizes the information on the dimensions and the indicators for each dimension. A set of questions was developed to measure each indicator. The questions that guided and structured the research process

Table 3. Summary of the dimensions and indicators used in the research

Dimensions	Indicators for measurement				
Implementation	Legislation	Administrative structures	Technical infrastructure	Practices and procedures	
Local ownership	Resources	Agenda setting	Know-How	Eagerness of state	Decision making
Gender issues	Inclusion of women	Gender mainstreaming			

are given in the annex. The questions were used for data gathering and for structuring the analysis. The information gathered was necessary to evaluate the results in each dimension, the final outcome. Some of the gathered data are quantitative, but most are qualitative. Therefore the analysis is mostly qualitative.

Interviews with key officials and experts were the basis for primary data gathering. Interviews were conducted for each regional initiative. Nine interviews were conducted in Albania, twelve in Bosnia and Herzegovina, ten in Croatia, eleven in Kosovo, nine in Macedonia, seven in Montenegro and thirteen in Serbia. The number of interviews varies because in some countries some public institutions were unresponsive (for example, the Employment Agency in Macedonia), and in others (for example, Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro) suitable experts could not be identified, especially in social development. Secondary data were gathered through desk research and based on relevant documents, media articles, research studies and other sources.

Conclusion

The process of regional cooperation is well under way in South East Europe. There is a plethora of regional cooperation initiatives in various policy areas. However, the results and outcomes are not always clear. What is especially unclear is the impact of regional cooperation initiatives on national-level institutions. Also unclear is the extent to which national-level institutions are sustaining and pushing forward the process of regional cooperation. Reports on regional cooperation and research studies concerning regional cooperation in the Western Balkans lack such data.

This study aims to cast a first light on this matter. The study is grounded in theory and follows methodological guidelines to construct indicators for measuring regional cooperation. However it was not done just as an academic exercise. The findings and recommendations represent a useful policy contribution. The study focuses on national-level institutions and has chapters on all seven countries in South East Europe.

Alba Cela and Enfrid Islami find that integration in the EU and NATO, and cooperation with the EU and the United States are moving regional cooperation forward in Albania. They find that national-level capacities are lacking human and administrative resources and that there is greater need for coordination among different national-level institutions. They argue for setting clear priorities for supporting regional cooperation initiatives because »there is a noticeable discrepancy between the number of regional initiatives ... and budget allocations for implementation«. They make a case for increasing the capacities of the Regional Initiatives Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Albania.

Lejla Kablar and Zoran Matija Kulundžić find that the multiple levels of responsibility deriving from the complex institutional design constitute impediments to pushing regional cooperation forward in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

They reiterate that human and administrative capacities must be increased in the national-level institutions in charge of regional cooperation and that more coordination is needed. They argue for greater involvement of national-level institutions in shaping regional cooperation and increasing gender mainstreaming.

Sandro Knezović finds that there is sufficient legislation in place to support regional cooperation in Croatia. However, there are still some challenges when it comes to implementation with regard to with regard to human resources and technical infrastructure. He finds that »decision makers and staff involved in the work of the initiatives demonstrate relatively low awareness« of »the importance of state-level influences on regional cooperation and of local responsibility for the processes«. He makes a strong case for increasing the public visibility of the regional cooperation initiatives, especially their digital visibility.

Fatmir Curri and Mimika Loshi find that Kosovo is a special case when it comes to regional cooperation. The disputed status and unresolved issues with Serbia hinder Kosovo's prospects with regard to regional cooperation. However, the research was done at the end of 2012 and hopefully the agreement reached between Kosovo and Serbia in April 2013 will help to alleviate this situation in future. They argue that Kosovo needs a strategic framework and a priority list of regional cooperation initiatives. The political will is clearly there, but the country needs to balance it with the available resources.

Martin Pechijareski finds that legislation is in place and that women's participation is high in national-level institutions in charge of regional cooperation in Macedonia. There have been some improvements in administrative capacities, but the level of local ownership

remains weak. The politicization of the public administration and changes of staff when political power shifts hinder Macedonia's involvement in regional cooperation. He argues for merit-based appointments of personnel in charge of regional cooperation and budget reallocation to support an increase of human resources and technical capacities.

Nenad Koprivica, Dženita Brčvak and Emir Kalač find that even though regional cooperation is a priority, practice is different in Montenegro. In their view, involvement in regional cooperation initiatives has had a limited impact on national-level institutions. There have been no significant changes in administrative or technical capacities and there are frequent changes in personnel. On the other hand, gender equality in national-level institutions in charge of regional cooperation is exemplary. The authors argue for increasing the visibility of regional cooperation initiatives and involvement of national-level institutions and civil society.

Filip Ejdus finds that the normative framework is in place, but there is a need for horizontal coordination among national-level institutions involved in regional cooperation initiatives in Serbia. He argues that this can be done under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He also finds that women are slightly overrepresented in the national institutions in charge of regional cooperation and that there is a greater political will to support regional cooperation in justice and home affairs than in social development. He recommends country specialization in regional cooperation initiatives which supports »functional differentiation between countries of the region, increased mutual trust and a greater level of regional integration«.

There is also a comparative chapter that offers cross-country comparison. This chapter shows

how national-level institutions in each country are doing with regard to implementation, local ownership and gender issues in regional cooperation initiatives. The chapter presents the common strengths and weaknesses of national-level institutions across the Western Balkans in supporting regional cooperation. It also sheds light on the way national-level institutions approach regional cooperation initiatives in the policy areas of justice and home affairs and social development. The findings refute the neo-functionalist assumption that regional cooperation will move forward from areas of low politics to areas of high politics. In South East Europe regional cooperation is an elite-driven process fostered by international actors and integration in the EU and NATO. In combination with the post-conflict security concerns, such a framework puts regional co-

operation in justice and home affairs before regional cooperation on social development.

The concluding chapter summarises the findings and recommendations. Recommendations are given to international actors and – especially – to national-level institutions. It seems that in all South East European countries there is a need for greater investment in human resources, administrative capacities and technical infrastructure that will support regional cooperation initiatives. Surprisingly, gender issues are not a concern and civil society can be more involved. National-level institutions definitely need to allocate more resources to support regional cooperation and increase the visibility of initiatives, especially in publicizing success stories and best practices.

Annex: Structure and questions for the country studies

The country chapters have three parts:
Part A. Background information
Part B. Analysis of the initiatives
Part C. Conclusion and recommendations

PART A: Background information (General information)
This part provides an introduction to the country. It should be a snapshot of the main political and structural points that represent incentives or impediments for regional cooperation. Some questions to consider are:
1. What is the political system like, when are the electoral cycles and what changes have they brought in terms of governing coalitions?
2. How are relations with the EU, NATO, the United States and the IMF/WB?
3. What are the main political and economic

interests with regard to engaging in regional cooperation or disengaging from it?
4. What identities (culture, language, history) support and which impede regional cooperation?
5. What attributes (geography, demography, connections) support and which impede regional cooperation?

PART B: Policy research (based on interviews and data gathering)
This part analyses the implementation of regional initiatives at the national level. It should reflect the capacities at national level implementing regional initiatives and their performance. This part will present the evaluation of the dimensions based on the measurement for each of the indicators. The guiding questions for each indicator are given below.

1. (Static Dimension) Implementation

A. Legislation
• Was new legislation needed to implement the regional initiative?
• Did the legislation (standards, criteria) already exist? What is the status of the legislation: is it in place, if not, when will it be enacted?
• Does the legislation fulfil the regionally set criteria?
• Who brought the legislation and how fast was it done?
• How concrete is the legislation: are there action plans or are more concrete acts (that is, by-laws) needed?

B. Administrative structures
• Was there a need to set up new units/bodies or are the existing units/bodies used?
• Was new/more staff employed to take charge of the implementation of the regional initiative? If yes, how were they recruited? Was there any specific training for them?
• Is staff seconded to regional bodies dealing with the regional initiative?

C. Technical infrastructure
• Was there a need for new facilities (purchase, rent, building) or are existing ones used?
• Were new/more technical capacities (computers, desks, printers and so on) purchased or are existing ones used?

D. Practices and procedures for implementation of the regional initiative
1. Who attends the national-level working meetings? At which levels are these meetings held and how often do they take place? Who usually initiates these meetings?
2. Is there a process of consultation and inclusion of Civil Society Organizations (CSO)?

2. (Dynamic Dimension) Local ownership

A. Resources
• What is the budget allocation for the implementation of the regional initiative? How much is it in total as a proportion of the budget, as a percentage of GDP and in the overall financing of the initiative (that is, country participation in the financing of the initiative)?

B. Agenda setting
• Who decides the issues that are discussed at national meetings?
• Who decides the issues that are discussed at regional meetings?
• Are there consultations with CSO for agenda setting?

C. Eagerness of the state
• Who initiates meetings at national level? How often?
• Who initiates meetings at regional level? How often?

D. Decision making
• At what level are decisions made concerning the regional initiative at national level (that is, who is the boss)? How are the decisions made?
• At what level are the decisions implemented? Who is in charge of implementation; is it the same as the decision-makers or lower?

3. (Cross-cutting Dimension) Gender

A. Women's inclusion

How many women are included in the implementation of the regional initiative at the national level?

- What positions do women occupy (team leader, assistant and so on)?

B. Gender mainstreaming
- Are there plans to involve more women in the work? Why?
- Are there considerations to include gender-related issues? If yes, what examples can be shared? If no, why not?

PART C: Conclusions and recommendations
This part summarizes the main findings and gives policy recommendations. Some questions to consider are:
- What are the main findings of your analysis? What are the main points that you want to highlight?
- What are the main recommendations? What can be done to improve things? Who needs to do it?

Bibliography

Anastasakis, Othon and Bojicic, Dzelilovic, Vesna (2002), *Balkan Regional Cooperation and European Integration.* London: London School of Economic and Political Science.

Bastian, Jens (2008), »Cry Wolf« No More: External Anchors and Internal Dynamics in the Western Balkans, in: *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 8 (4): 325–344. London: Routledge; available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14683850802556368

Bastian, Jens (2011), Cross-border Cooperation in the Western Balkans – Roadblocks and Prospects, in: *TransConflict Online* (16.03.2011)*,* available at: http://www.transconflict.com/2011/03/cbc-wb-roadblocks-prospects-163/ (last accessed on 22.04.2012)

Bechev, Dimitar (2006), Carrots, Sticks and Norms: The EU and Regional Cooperation in Southeast Europe, in: *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans Online*, 8 (1): 27–43. London: Routledge; available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14613190600595515

Breslin, Shaun and Higgott, Richard (2000), Studying Regions: Learning from the Old, Constructing the New, in: *New Political Economy*, 5 (3): 333–352. London: Taylor and Francis Ltd; available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/713687784

De Lombaerde, Philippe, Pietrangeli, Giulia and Weeratunge, Chatrini (2008), Systems of Indicators for Monitoring Regional Integration Processes: Where Do We Stand?, in: *The Integrated Assessment Journal*, 8 (2): 39–67.

De Lombaerde, Philippe, and Van Langenhove, Luk (2005), Indicators of Regional Integration: Methodological Issues, in: *Discussion Paper No.64, Institute for International Integration Studies.* Dublin: IIIS.

Delevic, Milica (2007), Regional Cooperation in the Western Balkans, Chaillot Paper No. 104. Paris: Institute for Security Studies.

European Commission (2005), *Regional Cooperation in the Western Balkans. A Policy Priority for the European Union.* Brussels: European Union.

Feng, Yi and Genca, Gaspare M. (2003), Regional Integration and Domestic Institutional Homogeneity: A Comparative Analysis of Regional Integration in the Americas, Pacific Asia and Western Europe, in: *Review of International Political Economy*, 10 (2): 278–309. London: Taylor & Francis Group; available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/4177461.

Grupe, Claudia and Kušić, Siniša (2005), Intra-regional Cooperation in the Western Balkans: Under Which Conditions Does it Foster Economic Progress?, Discussion Paper 37, Centre for the Study of Global Governance. London: LSE.

Marchand, Marianne H., Boas, Morten and Shaw, Timothy M. (1999), The Political Economy of New Regionalism, in: *Third World Quarterly*, 20 (5): 897–910. London: Taylor & Francis Ltd, available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01436599913398

Oktem, Kerem and Bechev, Dimitar (2006), (Trans)Nationalism in Southeast Europe: Constructing, Transcending and Reinforcing Borders, in: *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 6 (4): 479–482. London: Routledge; available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14683850601016341

Regional Cooperation Council (2010), *Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) Strategy and Work Programme 2011–2013.* Sarajevo: RCC; available at: http://www.rcc.int/admin/files/docs/reports/RCC-Strategy-and-Work-Programme-2011-13-text.pdf

Regional Cooperation Council (2011), *Annual Report of the Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council on Regional Co-operation in South East Europe 2010–2011.* Sarajevo: Regional Cooperation Council, available at: http://www.rcc.int/admin/files/docs/reports/RCC-Annual-Report-2010-2011-text.pdf

Regional Cooperation Council (2012), *Annual Report of the Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council on Regional Co-operation in South East Europe 2011–2012.* Sarajevo: RCC; available at: http://www.rcc.int/admin/files/docs/reports/RCC-Annual-Report-2011-2012-text.pdf

Stubbs, Paul and Solioz, Christophe (eds) (2012), Towards Open Regionalism in South East Europe, in: *Southeast European Integration Perspectives*, vol. 6. Baden-Baden: Nomos.

Stubos, George and Tsikripis, Ioannis (2008), Regional Integration Challenges in South East Europe: Banking Sector Trends, in: *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 7 (1): 57–81. London: Routledge; available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14683850701189329

Comparative Analysis of Regional Cooperation in South East Europe

How Are National-level Institutions Performing and What Is Moving Regional Cooperation Forward?

Dane Taleski

Introduction

This part shows how national-level institutions in each country are doing with regard to the implementation, local ownership and gender issues of regional cooperation initiatives. The chapter shows the common strengths and weaknesses of national-level institutions across South East Europe with regard to supporting regional cooperation. It also sheds light on the way in which national-level institutions approach regional cooperation initiatives in the policy areas of justice and home affairs and social development.

The findings refute the neo-functionalist assumption that regional cooperation will move forward from areas of low politics to areas of high politics. In South East Europe regional cooperation is an elite-driven process fostered by international actors and EU integration. In combination with the post-conflict security concerns, such a framework puts regional cooperation in justice and home affairs before regional cooperation on social development.

The chapter first outlines the state of play in regional cooperation and offers a model for analysis. The second part summarizes the results from the monitoring of national institutions by country. The third part presents a cross-country analysis reflecting the impact of regional initiatives on implementation, local ownership and gender issues in national institutions. The conclusion assesses the results compared to expectations arising from the model and compares regional cooperation in justice and home affairs to cooperation in social development.

State of play and model for analysis

The process of regional cooperation is influenced by international and domestic policies, on one hand, and by states' interests, identities and attributes, on the other. The Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) is the meeting point and coordinator of domestic and international policies. The RCC coordinates and oversees regional cooperation initiatives. The initiatives are in various policy areas. Some have structures, regional secretariats, that push the work forward and others do not have such structures. All regional cooperation initiatives rely on national-level institutions for implementation. In this implementation, these institutions include (cooperate with and/or are influenced by) national non-state actors, such as civil society organizations, business interests and local self-governments. This state of play is shown in Figure 1.

The depiction of the state of play is for academic and analytical purposes. In reality, international and domestic politics are
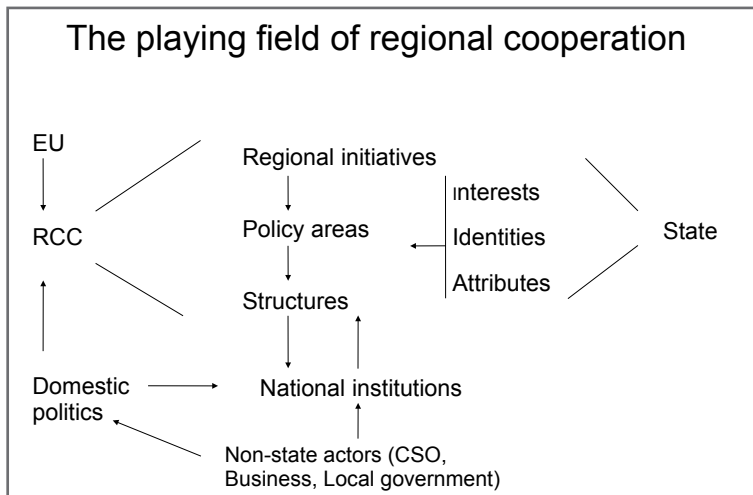
The playing field of regional cooperation

Figure 1. The state of play with regard to regional cooperation

not mutually exclusive. The RCC is an active actor in creating regional cooperation initiatives. State interests, identities and attributes are intertwined with domestic politics and the work of national institutions. National institutions influence regional initiatives, for example in agenda setting. Figure 1 serves to point out that impulses for regional cooperation can come from the EU level or from domestic politics. State interests, identities or attributes (for example, geographical proximity and transportation routes) can be instrumental in regional cooperation.

The depiction in Figure 1 is a necessary step in building a model for the analysis of regional cooperation in South East Europe (SEE). In the
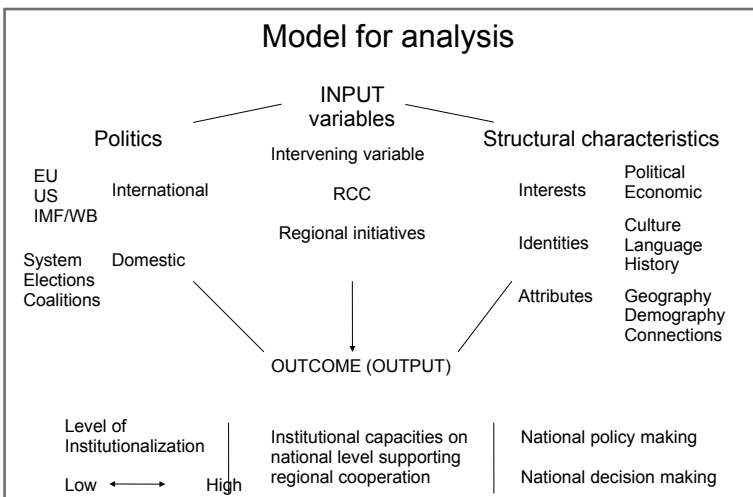
Model for analysis

Figure 2: Model for analysis of regional cooperation in South East Europe

interests of this research the model should identify the input variables that influence regional cooperation and the output of this process. Such a model is given in Figure 2.

The model defines two input variables (politics and structural characteristics) and one intervening variable (RCC). Politics is further divided into international and domestic. International actors such as the EU, the United States or the IMF/WB play a role in international politics. Hypothetically, a specific action of an international actor provides an impulse from international politics that pushes forward or hinders regional cooperation in South East Europe. For example, adaptation of EU legislation can help to craft standards for regional cooperation or donor support for administrative and technical reform can aid the process of regional cooperation. Political systems, elections and governing coalitions play a role in domestic politics. Hypothetically, institutional designs and changes in government provide impulses that support or slow down regional cooperation. Complex institutional design, which slows down the work of administration, would be an impediment to regional cooperation, while institutionalized practices and procedures would push regional cooperation forward. Electoral and governing stability would be expected to foster regional cooperation if it is in line with the prevailing interests. That is why on the other side of the input variables are structural characteristics. They are divided into interests (political and economic), identities (culture, language, history) and attributes (geography, demography, connections). Each of this is a factor contributing to or impairing regional cooperation. The RCC is treated as an intervening variable. It has a strong influence on regional cooperation and it is the place where politics and structural characteristics come together.

The main interest of the research was the institutions at national level involved in region-

al cooperation initiatives. The methodological design for measuring their performance was explained in the introduction above. Three dimensions were identified: implementation, local ownership and gender issues, and for each of these dimensions indicators were developed to measure performance. The structured research was conducted in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. This gives an overview of how each individual country is doing and allows for cross-country comparisons.

Overview of national-level institution performance in regional cooperation

Albania

After years of isolation Albania opened up for international cooperation in the early 1990s. Infrastructural links with the region are poorly developed and the main economic relations are with Greece and Italy. Albania has good relations with Montenegro and Macedonia. Regional cooperation is seen as an added value of Euro-Atlantic integration and Albania seeks to represent the interests of Kosovo in regional forums. Traditional, linguistic and cultural elements make Albania the centre of the wider Albanian population living in Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

Internally, the country is strongly polarized between the political left and right. These elements influence national-level institutions in Albania, whose performance in regional cooperation initiatives is summarized in Table 1.

Albania's legislative framework supports regional cooperation. Albania is a signatory of regional initiatives and the legislative framework is further strengthened by adoption of the *acquis communautaire*. Regional cooperation initiatives are complementary to the *acquis*.

New administrative capacities have not been developed in Albania to support regional cooperation initiatives. New personnel have not been hired. The existing staff and administration in line ministries simply have to take on any additional work. The Department of Regional Initiatives, within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, should have an overview of all regional initiatives, but there is a lack of cooperation and exchange of information with the national-level personnel involved in regional cooperation initiatives. Albania has not invested in new technical infrastructure to support regional cooperation. The only exception is the technical infrastructure used in the work of SECI/SELEC, which was donated by SELEC headquarters.

The practices and procedures for regional cooperation initiatives in national-level institutions are institutionalized but sporadic in Albania. This means that there are regular

Table 1: Performance of Albania's national-level institutions in regional cooperation

Dimensions	Indicators and measurement			
Implementation	Legislation	Administrative structures	Technical infrastructure	Practices and procedures
	In place	No new capacities	No new capacities	Institutionalized, sporadic
Local ownership	Resources	Agenda setting	Eagerness of state	Decision making
	Contribution fees	Top-down	Low, high in presidency	Level varies depending on the issue
Gender issues	Inclusion of women	Gender mainstreaming		
	Over 50 per cent	In practice		

meetings of relevant officials from line ministries and other public institutions, but they happen only once or twice per year. Beside these sporadic meetings there are activities arising from regional cooperation initiatives, such as conferences, training courses and summer schools. Civil society organizations are generally not included in such meetings. Albanian officials claim that the country pays contribution fees to regional initiatives, but our research shows that Albania has allocated no more than 50,000 US dollars for all activities related to regional initiatives.

Agenda setting is top-down. Albanian national-level institutions wait for regional-level units to initiate issues and move regional cooperation forward. An exception to this is when Albania chairs an initiative. Then it pushes for improvements of regional cooperation. This was the case with the Albanian initiative for a so-called »Balkan Schengen«, allowing free border crossing, during the Albanian presidency of MARRI in 2010–2011.

Decision making in national-level institutions concerning regional cooperation initiatives varies. While line ministries are usually in charge, the level of decision making can increase, subject to the sensitivity of the issues. Hence, regional cooperation issues can be decided at a technical level, but this can easily change to a high political level.

Over 50 per cent of national coordinators of regional cooperation initiatives in Albania are women. This provides them with an op-portunity to introduce gender mainstreaming practices, mainly in agenda setting, but also in decision making.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is characterized by a complex institutional design, with two »entities«, 10 cantons and one independent district, Brčko. The division of competences impedes the decision-making process. NATO and EU integration are the main foreign policy priorities and shape regional relations. Unresolved bilateral disputes with neighbours and unresolved reconciliation processes are also an important element for BiH. BiH is functionally interconnected with other countries in South East Europe in terms of transport infrastructure and trade, and shares many cultural elements with them. Table 2 summarizes the results from monitoring.

BiH is a signatory of regional cooperation initiatives. Much of the legislation covering the regional cooperation initiatives at national level was part of the Road Map for Visa Liberalization in BiH. This applies in particular to justice and home affairs issues (MARRI, RAI). The legislative basis in justice and home affairs is quite advanced, with additional by-laws, strategic plans and action plans.

New administrative structures were not set up to support and implement the regional cooperation initiatives in BiH. New personnel were not hired and new technical infrastruc-

Table 2: Performance of BiH's national-level institutions in regional cooperation

Dimensions	Indicators and measurement			
Implementation	Legislation	Administrative structures	Technical infrastructure	Practices and procedures
	In place	No new capacities	No new capacities	Informal, ad hoc
Local ownership	Resources	Agenda setting	Eagerness of state	Decision making
	Contribution fees	Flexible, institutional constraints	Low, high under Albanian presidency	Political and institutional constrains
Gender issues	Inclusion of women	Gender mainstreaming		
	Underrepresented	No practice		

Table 3: Performance of Croatia's national-level institutions in regional cooperation

Dimensions	Indicators and measurement			
Implementation	Legislation	Administrative structures	Technical infrastructure	Practices and procedures
	In place	No new capacities	No new capacities	Informal, ad hoc
Local ownership	Resources	Agenda setting	Eagerness of state	Decision making
	Contribution fees	Institutionalized, top-down	Medium, high in presidency	High political level
Gender issues	Inclusion of women	Gender mainstreaming		
	Overrepresented	No practice		

ture was not purchased or built. However, the Regional Centre for Mental Health established in 2010 within the Ministry of Civil Affairs is an exception to this. Material, technical and administrative support was provided by foreign donors, while offices and personnel came from the Ministry. Regional cooperation initiatives rely on the existing administrative and technical infrastructure within national-level institutions.

Practices and procedures are informal and on an ad hoc basis in BiH. Due to the institutional complexity, there is often a need to consult different institutional stakeholders. Hence national-level meetings on regional cooperation initiatives can easily turn into ministerial conferences, bringing together entity-level with state-level officials. All national stakeholders agree that their internal coordination and communication should be improved. The involvement of civil society organisations is underdeveloped.

Officials in BiH claimed that the country regularly pays contribution fees for regional cooperation initiatives. Agenda setting in justice and home affairs issues is flexible, while social development initiatives are hindered due to the multiple levels of responsibility and highly politicized environment. National-level institutions are not particularly eager to push regional cooperation forward, except if they are presiding over the initiative. Decision making often requires wide political consensus on various issues and in different initiatives, particularly social development issues.

This impedes BiH participation in regional cooperation. In example, BiH cannot use the transplantation expertise in Croatia provided by the Regional Health Development Centre on Human Organs and Transplant Medicine in Zagreb.

Women are underrepresented in national-level institutions that implement regional cooperation initiatives. National coordinators, liaison officers and high-level officials are usually men. Additionally, gender mainstreaming practices are lacking in BiH.

Croatia

Croatia's geographical position and part of its identity are embedded in the region. However, its outlook and development are oriented towards the EU. EU integration shapes the reform process in Croatia and the level of regional cooperation in which the country is involved. Adjustment to the EU pushes regional cooperation forward in some cases (rule of law, justice and home affairs), but not in all (leaving CEFTA will negatively influence regional trade). Historical and cultural proximity, along with the lack of language barrier and transport networks, support regional cooperation. Table 3 summarizes how national-level institutions perform when it comes to regional initiatives.

Croatia participates in all regional cooperation initiatives. To a large extent Croatia has adopted the EU *acquis*, which has made the legislative implementation of regional

initiatives much easier. New administrative structures have not been set up and new personnel have not been hired, however. The existing national-level institutional capacities deal with regional cooperation initiatives. Some staff are seconded to justice and home affairs initiatives. New technical infrastructure has not been purchased or built. The financial capacities limit technical improvements, despite the advocated need (specialist technical devices for SEEHN).

Practices and procedures are informal and on an ad hoc basis. Meetings can be held frequently if needed. On the managerial level they can be initiated by directorates in line ministries or national coordinators. Different stakeholders from national institutions participate in the meetings, while civil society organisations are included to a lesser degree. Croatia pays the contribution fees for regional cooperation initiatives.

Agenda setting seems institutionalized in Croatia. There is a clear delineation of tasks and some meetings are task oriented. In social development initiatives agenda setting is at administrative level, not the high political level. On the other hand, in justice and home affairs regional bodies play a substantial role in agenda setting. There is some eagerness in Croatia to sustain involvement in regional cooperation initiatives. Initiation of meetings is coherent and regular among national-level institutions in different regional initiatives. This impulse increases when Croatia is chairing a regional initiative. Decision making concerning regional cooperation initiatives in national institutions in Croatia are usually made at ministerial level. Exceptionally for less important issues decisions can be made at high administrative level in a line ministry. The implementation of decisions depends on lower administrative levels in the line ministries.

Women are overrepresented in national-level institutions implementing regional co-operation initiatives in Croatia. Interviewees claimed that women constitute a majority in Croatian administration in general and saw no need to include gender mainstreaming in the practices of national-level institutions dealing with regional cooperation initiatives.

Kosovo

Kosovo presents a special case in this analysis. The country did not take part in regional cooperation initiatives due to objections from Serbia. Hopefully, the agreement between Kosovo and Serbia from April 2013 will change this situation. At the time the research was carried out Kosovo did not participate in the initiatives that were monitored, except for the RP-SSCSSR. The research focused on the experience from RP-SSCSSR and the current capacities of the institutions, thus providing recommendations for future participation in regional cooperation initiatives.

There is a strong political will among the authorities in Kosovo to take part in regional cooperation initiatives. However, this political will probably reflects a political elite catering to the electorate's demand for higher international representation and visibility. In regional cooperation Kosovo was represented by UNMIK when possible, or its views and interest were presented by Albania. The EU is also trying to assist Kosovo's participation in regional cooperation. The EU Special Representative in Kosovo has appointed an advisor for regional cooperation.

In the meantime, Kosovo's national-level institutions would be wise to prepare and improve their capacities to cope with the increase in work and obligations that come with participation in regional cooperation initiatives. Kosovo lacks a strategy for joining regional initiatives and has not set priorities. Some administrative and technical infrastructure exists. However, practices and procedures of cooperation and coordination among line

Table 4: Performance of Macedonia's national-level institutions in regional cooperation

Dimensions	Indicators and measurement			
Implementation	Legislation	Administrative structures	Technical infrastructure	Practices and procedures
	In place	No new capacities	Some new capacities	Informal, ad-hoc
Local ownership	Resources	Agenda setting	Eagerness of state	Decision making
	Contribution fees	Institutionalized, diverse	Medium, high in presidency	High political level
Gender issues	Inclusion of women	Gender mainstreaming		
	Fairly represented	No practice		

ministries and other national institutions are far from clear. The experience from participating in RP-SSCSSR shows that Kosovo lacks quality staff and resources to make the most of it. Inter-ministerial coordination is weak and hinders the transposition of regional cooperation to national institutions.

In future, creating the legal basis should not present a great obstacle. Kosovo's legislative framework is already in place, taking into account international and EU standards. Administrative structures are weak, staff are few and undertrained, and improvements in technical capacities depend on foreign donors. National budget resources are scarce. Current practices and procedures are informal and on an ad hoc basis. In national-level institutions, agenda setting is top down. Decision-making is kept at the highest political level. This can give strong political momentum, but only if it is coupled with a clear institutional division of tasks and responsibilities. The experience from RP-SSCSSR shows that cooperation momentum is left to the regional level. Nevertheless, Kosovo has strong ambitions to participate in regional cooperation initiatives. It is likely to make a modest contribution, however, struggling with a lack of institutional clarity, insufficient resources and weak administrative and technical capacities.

Gender issues also represent a challenge for Kosovo. Even though there are plenty of women in the public administration, few are involved in activities related to regional cooperation. In the administration, women are rarely in top positions. More often they are either deputies or support staff. Kosovo's government put gender mainstreaming as a horizontal priority in its reform plan, but implementation is likely to remain a challenge.

Macedonia

Macedonia is located in the centre of South East Europe. The country is dependent on transport and economic connections with the region. Historical, cultural and linguistic similarities enable regional cooperation, along with the multicultural and multi-ethnic composition of Macedonia. The governing formula in Macedonia is always a multi-ethnic coalition. Even though this complex arrangement could be expected to slow down regional cooperation, research shows that this is not the case. EU and NATO integration are the main international policies and strongly influence regional cooperation. However, the unresolved name dispute with Greece hampers Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic integration. The results from the monitoring of national institutions' performance in regional initiatives are presented in Table 4.

In Macedonia, the legislative framework was set up by signing the regional cooperation agreements and with the adoption of the EU's standards in regional cooperation. The implementation of the legislation remains a challenge for national institutions, however.

Table 5: Performance of Montenegro's national-level institutions in regional cooperation

Dimensions	Indicators and measurement			
Implementation	Legislation	Administrative structures	Technical infrastructure	Practices and procedures
	In place	No new capacities	No new capacities	Informal, ad hoc
Local ownership	Resources	Agenda setting	Eagerness of state	Decision making
	Contribution fees	Institutionalized, top-down	Low, high in presidency	High political level
Gender issues	Inclusion of women	Gender mainstreaming		
	Fairly represented	No practice		

Justice and home affairs initiatives have more advanced and concrete legislation (such as strategies and action plans). This especially holds for MARRI since the secretariat is based in Skopje.

The regional cooperation initiatives have not had an impact on administrative structures in Macedonia. New personnel were not hired. The existing staff was used. New systematization was done in the administration and coordination was distributed among the different public institutions involved in the regional initiatives. Macedonia has provided offices for Secretariats for MARRI and SEEHN, both based in Skopje. Furniture, computers and printers were obtained from foreign donors.

Practices and procedures for holding meetings are informal. They happen as needed, and the level of meetings is decided depending on the issue at hand. The relevance of civil society is acknowledged but inclusion remains weak. MARRI is a good example of cooperation with universities and offering internships, and SEEHN relies on cooperation with civil society organisations for promotional activities. However, civil society organizations are not involved in decision making. Officials in Macedonia claim that the country pays the contribution fees for regional initiatives. Also Macedonia supports regional cooperation by providing office space for regional secretariats.

The process of agenda setting for regional cooperation in national-level institutions is institutionalized in Macedonia. However, national institutions from different initiatives follow different rules concerning the frequency and level of meetings. The institutionalized practice of agenda setting helps national institutions to sustain momentum and focus on regional cooperation initiatives. Heads of sectors take lower level decisions, but most issues, including seconding staff to regional secretariats, is decided at ministerial level.

Women are fairly well included in the national-level institutions handling regional cooperation initiatives. Women also occupy high positions in the hierarchy (national coordinators and liaison officers). Gender mainstreaming practices were not reported.

Montenegro

Montenegro is the smallest country in South East Europe and among the last to gain independence. Montenegro is characterized by high political stability, practically without changes in government. Transport, trade, culture and linguistic similarities push the country forward in regional cooperation in South East Europe. Regional cooperation is a foreign policy priority. However, this is viewed as a necessary condition for EU integration and not so much as a goal in itself. Table 5 summarizes the performance of national institutions in regional cooperation initiatives.

Montenegro takes part in all of the regional cooperation initiatives covered in the research. This provides the basis for the legal framework. However, since Montenegro

Table 6: Performance of Serbia's national-level institutions in regional cooperation

Dimensions	Indicators and measurement			
Implementation	Legislation	Administrative structures	Technical infrastructure	Practices and procedures
	In place	No new capacities	Some capacities	Institutionalized, ad hoc
Local ownership	Resources	Agenda setting	Eagerness of state	Decision making
	Contribution fees	Institutionalized, top-down	Medium, high in presidency	High political level
Gender issues	Inclusion of women	Gender mainstreaming		
	Overrepresented	No practice		

declared independence in 2006 new laws have been passed for the implementation of regional initiatives. This process was complemented by Montenegro's legislative adaptation to EU standards.

The existing administrative and technical infrastructure in national-level institutions is used to implement the regional cooperation initiatives. New personnel have not been hired. There is a problem of staff discontinuity. When administrative staff working on regional initiatives are moved to a new posting, their know-how and experience get lost. Practices and procedures are informal. Meetings and coordination are organized when needed. Various line ministries and relevant public institutions are involved in the process. Meetings are often initiated at the highest political level (minister of relevant line ministry). Civil society organizations are rarely included and consulted; they are included more in social development initiatives through public works programmes.

Montenegro pays contribution fees, with some delay, and contributes in-kind when the country hosts regional events. Agenda setting and decision making come from a high political level. Combined with the informal and ad hoc practices and procedures this results in a lack of eagerness on the part of Montenegro to push regional cooperation initiatives. However, this changes when the country is presiding over an initiative. Then public officials

see an opportunity for Montenegro to push its interests.

Women are fairly represented in national-level institutions handling regional cooperation initiatives. They not only form a significant part of the staff, but are also represented in top positions (national coordinators). Perhaps due to the higher level of women's representation, gender mainstreaming is lacking.

Serbia

EU integration is seen as the key driver of internal reforms and the main incentive for regional cooperation in Serbia. When dealing with the status of Kosovo, Serbia slowed down regional cooperation for its own political ends. On the other hand, economic relations, trade, transport and cultural and linguistic similarities push Serbia forward in regional cooperation in South East Europe. For the sake of stability and reconciliation, but primarily for its future within the EU, Serbia seems dedicated to regional cooperation. How the national level institutions in Serbia perform in regional initiatives can be seen in Table 6.

Signing the relevant documents that established regional cooperation initiatives provided the legal basis for them in Serbia. Some of the legislation in justice and home affairs initiatives is further developed with national strategies and action plans. Even though na-

tional strategies and actions plans exist in the policy areas of social development, they do not make specific reference to regional social development initiatives.

Regional cooperation initiatives have not had much impact on administrative structures in Serbia and limited impact on technical infrastructure (some computers have been purchased). New administrative units have not been formed and new personnel have not been hired. Some cross-sectoral coordination units and task forces have been created that bring together various national institutions. Meetings concerning regional cooperation initiatives are called on an ad hoc basis. Meetings are convened by the Deputy Minister for EU integration or by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The unresolved relationship between Serbia and Kosovo, relating to Kosovo's participation in regional cooperation initiatives, is among the main reasons for this.

Serbia pays the contribution fees for regional initiatives, with some delays, and contributes in-kind when the country hosts regional meetings. The highest political levels set the agenda at meetings dedicated to regional cooperation at national-level institutions. Decision making is kept at a high political level, especially when Kosovo is involved. Some technical and operational issues are handled at lower levels. This maintains good momentum in pushing forward activities connected to regional cooperation, especially in justice and home affairs initiatives. In example, Ivica Dačić, Serbia's Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, was directly involved in all activities related to MARRI. On the other hand, in social development initiatives such high political involvement and enthusiasm is not found.

Women are overrepresented in national-level institutions handling regional cooperation initiatives in Serbia. In some line ministries, women make up 60–70 per cent of the staff dealing with regional cooperation. Top level positions are also subject to gender balance. Hence officials do not see a need to include more women and did not report practices of gender mainstreaming.

Impacts at National Level and Contributions to Regional Cooperation

The summary of results shows that regional initiatives have had a limited impact on national-level institutions. The impact is greater in the dimension of local ownership and lower with regard to implementation. One would expect the reverse, with, first, implementation being secured and then regional initiatives becoming internalized and supported by national-level institutions. This is not the case across South East Europe.

In the dimension of implementation the legislation is in place in all the countries of South East Europe. After signing the regional initiative agreements there was no need for their further transposition in national legislation. Also, the process of approximating national legislation to EU standards forms the necessary legal basis for regional cooperation initiatives. In that sense, the formal legal framework is in place. However, this has not been followed by investment in administrative and technical capacities in any of the SEE countries. Implementation of and support for regional initiatives is left to the existing capacities in national-level institutions. Needless to say, this overburdens them and is not the most useful scenario for pushing regional cooperation forward. In some cases, horizontal cross-institutional cooperation is established at national level, while in others the Ministry of Foreign Affairs acts as a hub or coordinator of regional activities. In both cases there is a lack of information and coordination among the national-level institutions involved in regional cooperation, sometimes even among those involved in the same initiative. Practices and procedures tend to be run on an ad hoc

and as-needed basis. Meetings take place when an issue emerges or for the preparation of regional meetings. When practices and procedures are institutionalized (Albania, Serbia) this is because the process is centralized and does not transfer to lower levels of administration.

In the dimension of local ownership all the countries claim that they pay the contribution fees for regional initiatives. Some admit delays; SEE countries also provide in-kind support for regional events. However, none of the interviewed officials reported that resources beyond the contribution fees were allocated to support regional cooperation. This shows that the national support for regional cooperation is limited to verbal support and participation in the established initiatives. Agenda setting processes are institutionalized and top-down, although this varies in BiH due to the institutional complexity. Issues come up from regional level or from higher political levels. Decision making is also left to the highest political level. It depends on the issue, but it would be safe to say that ministers make most of the decisions about regional initiatives at national level. The countries are eager to push regional cooperation forward when they are chairing initiatives – or rather they see an opportunity to put their interests forward within the framework of regional cooperation. The involvement of high level officials preserves the momentum for regional cooperation. But this applies only to the initiatives in which they are directly involved (for example, the Serbian Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior in MARRI). Bearing in mind the full agenda of government ministers one would expect that their time and dedication go first to domestic issues and only secondarily to regional cooperation.

Concerning gender issues, there is substantial involvement and representation of women in national-level institutions working on regional cooperation. In South East Europe, women are substantially represented in the administration, expect for BiH. In some cases this applies also to the hierarchy, in which women serve as national coordinators or have other managerial positions in regional initiatives. In other cases women are deputies and secondary staff. Surprisingly, gender mainstreaming was not reported. It seems that in places where women are overrepresented, the administration does not see a need for gender mainstreaming and where women are underrepresented there is a lack of awareness.

Conclusion

Our model for the analysis of regional cooperation outlines two general factors that influence regional cooperation: structural characteristics and politics. The structural characteristics push the countries forward in regional cooperation. However, there seem to be two sub-regions within South East Europe. The first is made up mainly of Albania and Kosovo, which have linguistic and cultural similarities and have started to improve the transport infrastructure between them. The second region is made up of the former Yugoslav countries that share cultural and linguistic links, have a developed transport infrastructure and trade relations. The two regions are not mutually exclusive, but show affinities for close cooperation. Economic incentives are high for all SEE countries to develop regional cooperation

Domestic politics acts in two opposite directions: to support and to slow down regional cooperation. When it comes to unresolved bilateral disputes and unresolved reconciliation, domestic politics impedes regional cooperation. These impediments cannot be bypassed with initiatives in areas of low politics (for example, social development issues). National administration cannot move without political

leadership. And in cases where there are bilateral problems the reasoning of the political leadership is to impede regional cooperation in all policy areas.

International politics, especially EU integration, is the number one factor that pushes regional cooperation forward. For example, in Albania the EU put the fight against corruption as one of the twelve key recommendations. This pushed the country forward in RAI, besides developing other anti-corruption capacities. In the still divided and institutionally most complex Bosnia and Herzegovina EU integration remain the key external driver for regional cooperation. For BiH, regional cooperation is an integral part of the Stabilization and Association Process. In Croatia, the legislative framework for implementing regional cooperation initiatives is highly correlated with the advanced stage of Croatia's EU integration.

EU integration serves as basis for further development of the capacities of national institutions that are to be used in regional cooperation or cooperation within the EU. In Croatia, the Regional Programme on Social Security Coordination and Social Security Reforms in SEE (RP-SSCSSR) was later developed into a one-million-euro twinning project »Strengthening the administrative capacity of competent authorities and implementation agencies for the coordination of social security schemes«. The objective of the twinning project is to improve Croatia's social security administrative capacities. In Macedonia there has been a similar experience. The RP-SSCSSR initiative ended in 2010 and the twinning project »Strengthening the capacities for effective implementation of the *acquis* in the field of freedom for workers« will start from 2013.

International donor support is another contributing factor for regional cooperation. Without donor support there would not be investment in building administrative and technical capacities for regional cooperation in SEE countries. The role and functioning of the RCC and regional secretariats – our intervening variable – is complementary to that. The RCC and secretariats of regional initiatives seem instrumental in keeping the countries on track and engaged in regional cooperation.

Finally, one should say that regional cooperation is most developed in justice and home affairs initiatives. This applies especially to SECI/SELEC and MARRI. RAI is seen as not active, and there is less involvement and dedication on the part of national-level institutions. In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina it is easier for the country to participate in regional justice and home affairs cooperation initiatives than in social development initiatives. In Bosnia and Herzegovina the policies concerning justice and home affairs are a state-level competence. In contrast, social development issues are within the competence of entities or cantons, which makes BiH's regional cooperation involvement more difficult in these issues. In Croatia and Macedonia it was more difficult to identify experts on regional cooperation initiatives in social development than was the case with experts in justice and home affairs.

This shows that regional cooperation in South East Europe is an elite-driven process. This explains why the impact from regional initiatives is lower when it comes to implementation, while local ownership is higher. Justice and home affairs issues are higher on the agenda of the political elite. Also, the EU integration process puts more emphasis on justice and home affairs issues. This provides another push for the political elite to focus on this issue. Hence more attention is given to high political issues, deriving from justice and home affairs, and less attention to social development issues.

Social development initiatives remain ne-

glected, even though there are a couple of success stories that directly impact on and improve the lives of citizens. This holds in particular for cooperation in SEEHN. One SEEHN success story is from BiH, namely the building of a Regional Centre for Mental Health. The lesson learned is that it takes a strong commitment from national institutions and support from the Ministry of Civil Affairs in office and personnel and strong donor support. The model for local ownership is to have a clear focus and to prioritize the issue on the political agenda. Another SEEHN success story is Montenegro's benefits from health care outreach. In Podgorica kidney transplantation was performed by Croatian experts in cooperation with doctors from Montenegro. This was made possible because of the cooperation in SEEHN. Regional cooperation in social development issues has the potential to change and improve people's lives; however, it gets less attention as a political priority.

Monitoring Regional Cooperation in South East Europe:

Albania

Alba Cela and Enfrid Islami

1. Introduction

Since the collapse of the communist regime in the early 1990s, Albania, a formerly isolated country, has made a rapid entry into most international organizations and various types of international bodies and collaborative initiatives, at regional, European and global level. Quite independent of the politics at home, Albania's stance towards foreign policy has been that of a country interested in peaceful relations, trying to catch up with involvement in international affairs after many years of extreme isolation. Since 2008, Albania has been a member state of NATO and in 2005 it signed the Stability and Association Pact (SAA) with the EU, although it has yet to attain candidate status.

Albania's cooperation with regional structures is formally intense. Albania is part of virtually all the current initiatives listed by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), except the CPESSC (RCC Strategy, 2010).[1] According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website the recent policy towards regional cooperation is guided by two basic principles:

- increasing and strengthening regional cooperation as an added value in the Euro-Atlantic integration processes;
- continuous lobbying for the inclusion/representation of Kosovo in regional initiatives.

The second principle is allocated a considerable sum in the Ministry's annual budget. There have been cases when high-level Albanian politicians have refused to participate in regional initiative meetings because Kosovo had not been invited to join in or had not been reflected properly in the associated documents.[2]

Albanian institutions and organizations have also been steered into cooperation with regional actors through the instrument of pre-accession assistance (IPA), the EU funds devoted to encouraging cross-border projects. Indeed, mainly due to similar donor-driven incentives, civil society is well connected and has good networking practices with civil society from all over the region. National institutions in Albania have established relations with their counterparts in immediate neighbouring countries, such as Montenegro and Macedonia while the level of bilateral relations with others remains fairly low outside the formal context provided by regional cooperation initiatives.

Although Albania seems well connected and actively interacting with the region, the reality suggests a slightly different picture. Economically speaking, Albania's trade relations are largely oriented towards its EU member-state neighbours, with Italy and Greece having the lion's share of imports and overall trade. More specifically, 45 per cent of total

---

1 Excluding initiatives such as the International Sava River Basin Commission which naturally has no connection with Albania.

2 See: Albania blocks joint declaration at end of SEECP summit, at: http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics-article.php?yyyy=2012&mm=06&dd=15&nav_id=80779

Albanian exports go to Italy, and 8.5 per cent to Greece.[3] At the same time, 52 per cent of total Albanian imports come from Italy, whereas 13 per cent come from Greece.

Albania's infrastructural links to the rest of South East Europe are generally poor, although a range of developments are changing the landscape in this regard. Albania has no functioning railroad links to the rest of the countries in the region (except one line that transports goods to Montenegro) and the airlines offer no direct flights to the capitals of other Western Balkans countries. Hence roads are the most commonly used transport route. Albania has invested in improving the roads linking the country to border points with Macedonia and Kosovo, while work is still under way on the road to Montenegro.

If we assume the division suggested by Tim Judah between two loosely defined spheres in the Balkans, the Yugo-sphere and the Albano-sphere, then Albania is clearly the centre of a circle that encompasses strong linguistic, cultural and traditional links to Montenegro, Macedonia and Kosovo (with some of the influence reaching beyond to the southern Serbian area of Preshevo, inhabited largely by Albanians). However, given the historical separation of Albania from the rest of the world for almost half a century, including Albania's suspended diplomatic relations with the Republic of Yugoslavia as early as 1948, this influence is in competition with the economic and cultural links belonging to the Yugo-sphere.

There is a constant debate in Albania that discusses, promotes and challenges the agenda of creating a common Albano-sphere. The various positions belong to a wide spectrum, ranging from nationalistic demands for unification to proposals concerning a coordinated

Albanian foreign policy (with Albania often lobbying for the recognition of independent Kosovo) to more practical proposals to create a single market (a market for Albanian-speaking consumers). Initiatives abound also in the dimensions of converging education (common texts and curricula) and joint artistic or sports events (music festivals, book fairs, Albanian soccer players from Kosovo being included in the Albanian national team and so on).

In the economic field Albania and Kosovo, despite offering each other numerous incentives and facilitated practices, have not escaped from disputes in the area of trade where reference prices and customs tariffs have created friction between the trade and economy officials. Several political movements have picked up on the debate and suggest different ways of strengthening the Albano-sphere.[4] Another suggested option is to create a Benelux-like structure encompassing Albania, Macedonia, Kosovo and Montenegro, which would further the process of European integration (Fehlinger and Ekremi, 2012).

Hence regional cooperation in Albania is submerged in a context in which different overlapping agendas coexist and often collide. However, Albania's cautious foreign policy has subordinated the Kosovo support agenda to that of European integration, which requires regional cooperation. Hence the prevailing spirit favours collaboration. The aggressive tones of nationalistic rhetoric in Albania are related mainly to the upcoming electoral battle and their longevity remains to be tested after June. However, should the nationalistic political forces gain ground, Ti-

---

3 The Observatory of Economic Complexity: Albania, available at: http://atlas.media.mit.edu/country/alb/ (accessed on 21 January 2013).

4 Examples include the political movement G99 which has often advocated a strengthened sphere of influence and interaction on the part of Albania in relation to Albanian-inhabited areas. See »A Pan-Albanian political home«, available at: http://top-channel.tv/artikull.php?id=235084

rana's traditional pro-stability approach to the region will face new challenges.

2. Legal Basis

Albania is involved intensively in regional cooperation, in a number of different areas. The large number of initiatives and forums of which Albania is currently a member is proof of this. According to the Department of Regional Initiatives in the Albanian Foreign Ministry, the number of regional initiatives and forums in which Albania participates currently amounts to 127. The scope of these regional initiatives ranges from tourism, to transport, corruption, organized crime, education, energy development, cultural heritage, law enforcement, environment, trade and political cooperation.

More specifically, in the field of law enforcement and crime fighting in the region, Albania is a member of the Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre (SELEC, former SECI). Albania was accepted as a member after it signed the SELEC Convention in Bucharest in 2009 and it ratified it in November 2010. In 2010, the Albanian parliament also ratified the protocol on privileges and immunities for SELEC.

In the field of migration and asylum, Albania became a member of the Migration, Asylum, Refugees, Regional Initiative (MARRI) after it signed the Memorandum of Understanding of Tirana in July 2003. MARRI was formed in 2003 from merging the Migration and Asylum Initiative (MAI) and the Regional Return Initiative (RRI), both established within the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe.

In the fight against corruption, Albania became a member of Regional Anti-Corruption Initiatives (RAI) after the country's Minister of Justice signed the Memorandum of Understanding concerning Cooperation in Fighting Corruption through the South Eastern Euro-

pean Anti-Corruption Initiative in April 2007 in Zagreb. The initiative was later renamed RAI by the SPAI Steering Group meeting.

Albania was also among the beneficiaries of the Regional Programme on Social Coordination and Social Security Reforms in Southeast Europe (RP-SSCSSR) from March 2008 until the programme ended in November 2010.

In the health sector, Albania is a member of the South-eastern Europe Health Network (SEEHN). The country signed the Dubrovnik Pledge in 2001 in Dubrovnik. The country was also a signatory of both the Skopje Pledge in 2005 and, later on, of the Memorandum of Understanding in 2008, which legally bound the member countries to regional cooperation in the health sector.

Membership of the abovementioned initiative has been fairly easy to achieve in terms of legal requirements. The majority of these initiatives have not required additional legislation to be implemented by Albania in order for it to benefit from their activities on ground. This is because Albania's legislative framework is well on its way to adapting to the *acquis communautaire*. The exception is SELEC, as a result of the complicated way in which the initiative operates on the ground and regionally. The exchange of detailed information between countries required by SELEC's joint operations requires the approval and signing of specific legislation between member countries.

2.1 Implementation

Membership of the abovementioned regional initiatives has led Albania to create or adapt proper national administrative and financial resources for the purpose of proper implementation of the initiative on the ground. This paper presents a four-dimensional analysis of these initiatives when it comes to their implementation at the national level. It looks

at the legislation needed in order for the initiatives to function properly; the administrative structures created and/or adapted by the Albanian government to coordinate activities at the national level; technical infrastructure; and the practices and procedures Albania has had to follow as a result of membership of the abovementioned initiatives.

The Stability Pact, which was signed by most regional countries, could be described as the origin of many of the initiatives considered in the paper, such as MARRI, SEEHN and RP-SSCR. The pact provided for the legislative and cooperative framework for regional initiatives in which Albania is currently involved, including those considered in this paper. More specifically, SEEHN originated from a coordinated international effort to assist the development of the health sector in South Eastern Europe, to later achieve regional ownership. At the same time, RP-SSCR functioned on this premise. Interviews showed that the majority of the initiatives are based on bilateral agreements between member states (see RAI, SELEC, RP-SSCR,) and driven by internationally recognized criteria, such as migration laws and human rights (MARRI, SEEHN). The only initiative that required additional legislation to be approved in order for the initiative to work at the national level was SECI/SELEC. In 2009, the Albanian parliament ratified the Bucharest Agreement, and in 2010 it also ratified the protocol on privileges and immunities for SELEC.

Most of the initiatives, despite not needing new legislation to be approved in order to be effective, have nevertheless provided for the incentives needed to create efficient networks of cooperation in their respective fields. This exchange of best practices in security, health, social policy and anti-corruption, has led to the drafting of national legislation, which has helped in adapting to the *acquis communautaire*. In the case of RAI, for instance, the fight

against corruption was one of the 12 key recommendations set out in the 2010 Commission Report for Albania. The country is thus supposed to be well on its way to fulfilling these criteria. Interviews showed that most of the legislation (anti-corruption, law on confiscation of criminal assets, money laundering and so on) needed for the initiatives to function was either in the process of implementation even before the country became a member, or had already been finalized by the country as an important component of the EU integration process. In the case of Albania's membership of RP-SSCSSR, Albania had already ratified the ILO 201 Convention of 1952 on Social Security prior to membership in the programme, as well as the European Social Charter. The only legislation which has not been ratified in the area of social security is the European Social Security Code. Interviews showed that the attempt to adopt this legislation is in its early stages and more decisive involvement is required on the part of the Ministry of Integration and other responsible institutions.

On the matter of administrative capacities, interviews revealed that membership of the abovementioned regional initiatives has not brought about the relevant changes in terms of resources employed for their coordination at the local level.

From all initiatives considered for research purposes in this paper, none has led to the creation or adaptation of additional administrative bodies. An administrative department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for coordinating and collecting information on Albania's involvement in regional initiatives. However, research showed that cooperation and exchange of information between local coordinators of different regional initiatives in the country with this office was either lacking or insufficient. Therefore, the Department of Regional Initiatives was unable to provide suf-

ficient information on the initiatives. The Ministry of Internal Affairs and, more specifically, the Directorate for Citizenship and Refugees is also responsible for MARRI at the national level, the General Police Directorate and Customs are responsible for SELEC/SECI, and the Ministry of Health and the Department of European Agreement and Cooperation is the institution responsible for the implementation of SEEHN activities.

In terms of employment, it should be said that no additional personnel has been employed for the purpose of implementing or coordinating regional initiatives at the national level. It seems that the general strategy of the Albanian government has been to appoint public officials with the additional duty of supervising and coordinating regional initiatives at the national level. The argument is that the abovementioned initiatives are relatively small, serving mainly as a medium for networking between countries in the region. Their limited budget and small secretariats (the staff of RAI's secretariat, for instance, amounts to no more than seven people) do not require an increase in administrative and human resources. Most national coordinators already hold a position in the public administration, while also serving as focal point for the country in regional forums. The Albanian national coordinators for MARRI, SEEHN and RAI, for example, already hold an official position in the public administration, while at the same time supervising initiatives on the ground as an additional responsibility. More specifically, the national coordinator for MARRI in Albania is the head of the Directorate for Citizenship and Refugees in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the national coordinator for RAI, who has a full-time job coordinating the Department of Internal, Administrative Control and Anticorruption (DIACA), an important cross-institutional technical secretariat that monitors the anticorruption strategy.

The person responsible for coordinating the activities of RP-SCCSSR was also part of the Department of Social Services Policies at the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities.

Research also showed that there have been no additional investments in terms of the technical capacities needed to implement regional initiatives. For most of the initiatives – an except being SELEC/SECI – no additional equipment or offices have been purchased. The general Police Directorate has made space available for accommodating the office of the focal point for SELEC. However, logistics such as phone, fax and computers for this office have been provided by SELEC's headquarters. This is justified by the fact that SELEC uses encrypted lines of communication to exchange information with focal points in respective countries. As such, all logistics are tailored to better serve the purpose of secure transfer of information. For the rest of the initiatives, existing government offices and technical infrastructure are used.

In terms of practices and procedures the regional initiatives are more or less similar with regard to how they are implemented at the national level. Meetings and activities are held as planned by respective agendas of different regional initiatives, usually once or twice a year. Some of the initiatives researched in this paper hold meetings and conferences at the level of experts in their respective areas. In this regard, with support from SEEHN and the World Health Organization (WHO), Albania held its third National Conference on Mental Health in Tirana, on 11 October 2012. The focus of the conference was the development of treatments for mental illness in Albania and the conference as attended by experts (both national and foreign) in the fields of psychiatry, psychology, nursing and social work. Also, one of the first goals this regional forum set was the creation of Specialized Health Centres

in the region, which would serve as contact points for future cooperation among countries. In this perspective, it should be said that SEHHN has been successful, since there is currently at least one Specialized Health Centre in every member state. The Specialized Centre for Communicable Diseases in Albania is part of the Albanian Institute for Public Health.

From 2008–2011, while the RP-SCCSSR programme was still active, it provided training to approximately 20 employees of the public administration dealing with social security and pension schemes. Training focused mainly on two executive public institutions in the country that deal with social security coordination and schemes, the Institute for Social Security and Institute of Health Care Insurance. This training has subsequently been used to renegotiate bilateral agreements in the region. With the assistance of the RP-SSCSSR, since 2010 Albania has reorganised its work on agreements with five European member states in the area of social coordination. This fact was also mentioned in the latest European Commission report on Albania in October 2012.

By comparison, there are almost no public activities or meetings organized by RAI and SELEC, as a result of the specific nature of the work related to them. The first and last meeting of SELEC at the regional level in Albania was held in 2009. However, as part of its effort to coordinate and exchange expertise in the fight against corruption in the region, RAI organizes activities, trainings and workshops all across South Eastern Europe. One of these activities is the annual summer school for young magistrates in South Eastern Europe. In 2010, Albania was the member state responsible for organizing and hosting the event. The Summer School on International Standards and Cooperation in the fight against Corruption was held in Durres, from 31 May until 6 June. Meetings and conferences which are part of

the implementation of regional activities at the local level are usually supervised and organized by the respective ministries and coordinated by national focal points.

Interviews revealed that the inclusion of civil society organizations in the decision-making process of regional initiatives at the local level is lacking or at best insufficient. Representatives from civil society are rarely invited to attend activities organized by RAI or SELEC, usually justified by local authorities on the basis of the highly technical and professional dimension of the issues discussed. Among the regional initiatives researched for this paper, only SEEHN allows CSO participation in conferences on health issues. However, the impact of civil society on decision making is still very limited, because of the health sector is considered a matter of national policy by the respective institutions. Information about meetings and conference is usually not made available until the last moment and no effort is made by national coordinators or national institutions to include CSO in the consultation process.

2.2 Local Ownership

This section of the paper presents the results of research conducted at the level of local ownership of the regional initiatives in question in terms of resources invested, agenda setting, state enthusiasm and decision making.

In terms of funds and financing the regional initiatives under consideration apply different methods for financing their activities. Some of these initiatives are financed by annual national contributions from member states. More specifically, Albania pays an annual contribution for the purpose of supporting RAI's secretariat, which amounts to 24,000 euros. Contributions at SELEC/SECI are also done annually, with member states paying the same amount to support the initiative's Secretariat. MAR-

RI applies a different strategy, which allows member states to contribute, apart from their regular annual contributions for the initiative, to specific projects in which member states are interested. Among all the initiatives, SEEHN is the one with the most atypical system of financing from member states. SEEHN divides member states into four groups, based on their respective GDP's. The amount by which these member states contribute is set accordingly. Albania is placed in the second group – with GDP under 50 billion US dollars[5] – and provides 10 per cent of the costs, amounting to an annual 20,000 euros.

Agenda-setting for regional meetings and activities is more or less similar across the initiatives. Meetings and activities start as an initiative from the Secretariat, and then move to a stage where approval by all member states – including Albania – is required. Dates, locations and topics discussed during these meetings are usually decided by respective secretariats or other administrative bodies of the initiative. In some cases, such as RAI, meetings at the regional level are usually used to present the situation and inform counterparts about the most recent developments in the fight against corruption at national level. National focal points or coordinators in almost all cases have the right to propose topics or issues of relevance for discussion, depending on needs and member state priorities. Moreover, during the Albanian presidency of MARRI, from April 2010 to 2011, the Albanian government announced that its priority would be the realization of what regional countries call the »Balkan Schengen«. As a result of this initiative, citizens of the region would be able to move freely across borders in the region by using their respective identification document. The initiative could be considered suc-

cessful, since currently an Albanian citizen can cross the borders to Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Croatia simply by showing his national ID card. Following the same logic, interviews revealed that, with the assistance of SELEC, whenever two or more member states believe a joint operation of a certain type is required, they act on it with the assistance of SELEC, after reporting detailed information to the centre. As a result of cooperation at the regional level supported by SELEC, in 2011 alone, Albania successfully participated in 36 cross-border operations[6] and more than 46 people were arrested within Albanian borders for organized crime.

Eagerness of the state is another factor that needs to be taken into account when evaluating the level of local ownership of initiatives. Meetings at national level are usually called by national coordinators, and they are held once or twice a year. The number of meetings organized at the national level indeed increases when Albania holds the presidency of an initiative. In cases where special emergencies come up, or when particular issues need to be discussed and addressed at the national and regional level, national coordinators and relevant institutions proceed to organize more frequent meetings.

Last, but not least, decision making and the impact it has at the national level is another dimension of the regional initiatives that should be carefully considered. Depending on the initiative, the respective Ministry responsible for its implementation is usually the one that makes the decisions. However, depending on the importance of the issues discussed in regional forums, decisions on behalf of Albania may be taken by someone in a relatively high

---

5 Available at: http://seehnsec.blogspot.com/p/memorandum-of-understanding-2009.html (accessed on 16 January 2013).

6 Mr Burgaj: International cooperation and coordination in the fight against organized crime: Available at: http://www.asp.gov.al/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2185%3Aw&catid=41%3Ainformation-for-press&lang=sq (Accessed on January 15th, 2013).

public position at the level of head of department in the respective ministry. Interviews with experts during the research revealed that there was a substantial gap between what is put on paper in these regional forums and actual implementation. According to experts, the level of regional cooperation on issues such as migration is relatively low compared to other issues, despite the numerous official documents and memorandums signed by countries in the region. Even when migration is taken into account, the issue is seen mostly from the perspective of border security rather than as an option for economic development. In a region where more than 25 per cent of the total population are immigrants, it is of the utmost importance to realize the positive effects of regional cooperation. The same lack of a clear strategy can be seen in the use of remittances from countries in the region. Considering that remittances make up approximately 10 per cent of the GDP of each country in the region, governments do not seem to be willing or able to cooperate in order to make the most of this inflowing capital.

In the area of corruption, experts revealed that the three most important institutions responsible for the fight against corruption are the police force, the Ministry of Defence, and the General Prosecution Office. Most of the issues identified by them were a result of poor and insufficient efforts on the part of these institutions, in terms of translating anti-corruption reforms in strategy papers, into concrete, efficient actions on ground. They identified a negative trend in terms of regional cooperation between 2011 and 2012, compared to 2010–2011. Although they see an improvement in the exchange of critical information between Albania and Europol, the same cannot be said for Albania and other regional countries.

Cooperation between the countries in the region has been achieved only as a result of projects organized and implemented under NATO, such as the ones involving the Ministry of Defence.

As for the gender dimension of the initiatives in Albania, women's high level representation in national coordination points for regional initiatives is praiseworthy. Among national coordinators for the examined initiatives more than half of them are women (local coordinators for RAI, MARRI and SEEHN, and the Albanian representative for RP-SSCSSR during the time the programme was active). Vesting women with this responsibility gives them a real opportunity to advocate gender-sensitive priorities in the spaces provided for agenda-setting and, in a more limited way, even in decision making. Moreover, women in the relevant fields are often present and active in events and important initiatives of the regional initiatives, strengthening the voice of women in advocating their issues.

3 Conclusions and Recommendations

The involvement of Albania in a considerable number of regional initiatives may be considered a success story, especially considering the country's past. Making the transition from the extremely isolated reality of communist Albania to a country that participates actively in regional and international initiatives with the purpose of fostering good neighbourhood relations, as well as internal socio-economic development, certainly deserves praise. It would be safe to say that this transition is the hardest and most difficult one among all the countries in the region. While former members of Yugoslavia probably experienced multilateral cooperation much earlier, it has not been long since Albania has been willing and able to partake in collective endeavours of such a kind. Having said that, Albania's involvement in regional initiatives has been successful, although there are still issues that need to be addressed.

The threefold analysis of the six initiatives studied in this paper certainly provides for a comprehensive picture of the current situation regarding regional initiative implementation in Albania. Moreover, this study helps to identify needs and issues that must be addressed regarding practical implementation and may provide the responsible institutions with some relevant recommendations.

Albania participates in all of the activities supported and initiated by the regional initiatives, attending annual meetings of steering committees or participating in training courses and seminars. The central government has, in each case, appointed a local coordinator whose responsibility is to supervise, coordinate and report both to the Steering Committees and the government itself on the implementation of each initiative. There have also been cases where Albania has proposed certain actions with regard to these initiatives, resulting in successful implementation on the ground. In 2010, Albania proposed to the Steering Committee of the RP-SSCSSR its need to conduct thorough research on the state of national legislation in the area of social security and pension schemes. The initiative then allocated foreign experts, who, working together with national officials, were able to successfully asses the state of social security legislation in the country.

Research also showed that regional cooperation is not seen as having primary importance for the public in Albania. Periodic surveys on perceptions from the Albanian Institute for International Studies (including in 2012)[7] have shown that Albanians consider regional cooperation as only secondary to the needs of the country, in contrast to relations with major international organizations (UN, NATO), the United States and the EU. More-

over, Albanians believe that relations with neighbouring and regional countries need less strategic attention and commitment than those with Western European countries or the United States. Thus, it is clear that the public either is not aware of the benefits that result from these regional initiatives or is still influenced by prejudices from the conflict-ridden past. Evidently, there is still a lot to be done by responsible institutions in order to demonstrate the necessity of membership of initiatives of such a kind in terms of regional cooperation and the concrete benefits for ordinary Albanians in the context of European integration, as well as growing trade, infrastructure, education and other opportunities.

Despite all the above, interviews with local coordinators of initiatives, as well as experts in the different areas that they cover, revealed several flaws in the way they are implemented. In terms of administrative capacities, particularly human and financial resources, Albania faces some difficulties. Research has shown that for regional initiatives, one, or in the best case two, people serve as local coordinators. Most of the local coordinators for regional initiatives in Albania also hold an official position in the public administration. This leaves less time for the local coordinator to focus on the implementation of important initiatives, as for most of the time, he or she has to attend to its duties in the public administration. In other cases, the same person is appointed by the government to coordinate on-the-ground implementation of many regional initiatives and projects at the same time. Therefore, the amount of time and work this person is able to dedicate to the proper implementation of these initiatives is lacking or not sufficient in the best case.

At the same time, there is a noticeable discrepancy between the number of regional initiatives of which Albania is a member and budget allocations for the implementation of

---

7   The Albanian Institute for International Studies conducts annual studies and surveys on public perceptions of the EU and other international organizations.

these activities. In 2012, funds allocated from the budget for all activities related to regional initiatives amounted to no more than 50,000 US dollars, which does not even make up 1 per cent of the country's GDP.

Cooperation with civil society also seems to be a problem with Albania's involvement in regional initiatives. Despite the fact that during the interview stage of this report, there were successful cases of cooperation between local coordinators and us, in most others, we have found it difficult to contact responsible institutions and thus access necessary information. The implementation of these regional initiatives in Albania is also lacking in visibility terms. The public has almost no access in the workings and implementation of these initiatives. This reduces the ability of public opinion – represented mostly in its civil society organizations – to affect or influence the policymaking of their government in terms of regional cooperation to a minimum.

In terms of gender, the previously mentioned fact that coordinators have other, more substantial duties (such as head of cabinet or national coordinator) limits their opportunities to make the most of this opportunity. Also since all these women are under the authority of an all-male[8] ministerial cabinet, when it comes to the hard-core decision making or the most significant meetings their place is taken by their directors.

Another concern that public officials and experts revealed during interviews was the lack of a proper system of information exchange between different institutions in the country in relation to regional initiatives. While in some cases two different ministries may be responsible for the same regional initiative, communication and information exchange between them on implementation is inefficient. For in-stance, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Albania, which is supposedly the main focal point for all regional initiatives in the country, often receives no detailed information from other bodies responsible for the implementation of these regional activities.

A greater effort should be made to increase the visibility of the national implementation of these regional initiatives. To this end, civil society must be invited and systematically encouraged to attend forums, meetings and trainings that result from the implementation of these regional initiatives. Written reports, projects and findings must be made available to the public at large.

At the same time, mechanisms of information exchange on regional initiatives must be improved and institutions responsible for gathering information on these regional initiatives should be enhanced. Our research showed that the current Regional Initiatives Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was unable to provide us with necessary information about any of the initiatives that we had decided to look into for this project. The purpose of this office is to coordinate the implementation of regional initiatives on the ground, as well as to gather all required financial and administrative information related to initiatives. For this purpose, a small increase in personnel could be considered. This would certainly not require an excessive effort in terms of budget and it would help the office to better meet its obligations in terms of regional cooperation at the national level. The Regional Initiatives Department, as well as other focal points for regional initiatives in the country should also put more effort into coordinating their respective activities on the ground. Exchanges of administrative and financial information stemming from membership of these initiatives between the Regional Initiative Department and other responsible institutions should be constantly updated.

---

8   The only female minister in Albania is the Minister of European Integration (http://www.mie.gov.al).

More importantly, more local activism is needed. Albania's approach to these initiatives in terms of raising issues and concerns needs to be revamped and focus more on taking initiatives and setting agendas. The administrative structure of almost all initiatives allows each member state to introduce topics of discussion and concern. Therefore, it would be reasonable to expect Albania to use these regional roundtables to advocate matters of national interest, such as immigrant and workers' rights, health and social security of workers in the region. Whereas some of the initiatives discussed in this project are highly active in terms of proposing actions and initiatives to the respective Steering Committees (SELEC, RP-SSCSSR), others lack either the willingness or the capacity to advocate important national matters in these regional forums.

List of Interviews

Helena Papa: Coordinator/Inspector, Department of Internal Administrative Control and Anti-corruption; Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania

Mariola Qesaraku: Programme Officer and Researcher, Centre for European and Security Affairs (CESA), Institute for Democracy and Mediation

Kosta Bajraba: Dean of the School of Political Sciences of the newly founded Mediterranean University of Albania (MUA). He also serves as a lecturer at MUA in sociology and strategic management

Romeo Zegali: Head of the Department of European Agreement and Cooperation, Ministry of Health, Albania

Agim Pasholli: Head of the Regional Initiatives Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Albania

Drita Avdyli: Director for Citizenship and Refugees, Regional Coordinator of MARRI, National Commissioner for Refugees, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Albania

Commisar Renaldo Culli: National Focal Point for SELEC at the General Directorate of Police Forces

Diana Beqiri: Head of Social Insurance Sector; Directory of Social Services Policies; Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equally Opportunities, Albania

Rexhina Alimerko: State Official for Albania at MARRI Regional Centre, Skopje, Macedonia

Sources

Albania and regional initiatives' Ministry of Foreign Affairs web page (Accessed on June 21, 2012): http://www.mfa.gov.al/index.php?option=com_multicategories&view=article&id=7197%3Ashqiperia-dhe-nismat-rajonale&Itemid=65&lang=sq

BalkanWeb: Albania is handed the Presidency of MARRI. Available at: http://www.balkanweb.com/shqiperi/shqiperia-merr-drejtimin-e-marri-t-10477.html (accessed on 15 November 2012).

Commission Opinion on Albania's application for membership of the European Union, Brussels, Belgium 2010. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2010/package/al_opinion_2010_en.pdf (accessed on 5 November 2012).

Commission Staff Working Document. Albania 2012 Progress Report, Brussels, Belgium 10.10.2012. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2012/package/al_rapport_2012_en.pdf (accessed on 7 November 2012).

Convention of the Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre, Bucharest, 9 December 2009. Available at: http://www.selec.org/docs/PDF/SELEC%20Convention%20%5Bsigned%20on%2009.12.2009%5D.pdf (accessed on 2 November 2012).

Dubrovnik Pledge, 2.9 2001, Dubrovnik, Croatia. Available at: http://www.euro.who.int/en/what-we-do/health-topics/Health-systems/public-health-services/publications2/2001/dubrovnik-pledge-2001 (accessed on 2 November 2012).

Fehlinger, Günther and Ekrem Krasniqi, »Balkan ›Benelux‹ would speed up EU entry«, EUObserver.com (19.6.2012). Available at http://euobserver.com/7/116669 (accessed on 6 July 2012).

Skopje Pledge, 27 November 2005, Skopje, Macedonia. Available at http://www.euro.who.int/en/what-we-do/health-topics/Health-systems/public-health-services/publications2/2005/skopje-pledge-2005 (accessed on 2 November 2012)

Monitoring Regional Cooperation in South East Europe:

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Lejla Kablar and
Zoran Matija Kulundžić

Introduction

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is a country with a complex and expensive government structure. The BiH Constitution (Annex IV Dayton Peace Accords) provides that BiH consists of two entities: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) and Republika Srpska (RS). Furthermore, the Federation of BiH is composed of 10 Cantons. In addition, the Brčko district was established in 1996 after an arbitration process led by the High Representative for BiH. Such political arrangements produced a governance structure with 13 constitutions and parliaments and 13 governments[9] with more than 150 ministries.

Each of the entities enjoys its own administrative structure and financial independence. The fact that the entities enjoy exclusive competencies in some areas and shared competencies in others within the framework of regional initiatives affects both the level of importance and the way regional initiatives are administered at the national level. Such multiple layers of governance have to be kept in mind when we discuss and analyse the regional initiatives implemented in BiH.

BiH has held regular elections since 1996. The latest general elections were held in 2010 and were characterized by the highest turnout (56.28 per cent) since the national authorities took over the organisation of the elections.

The years preceding the 2010 elections were marked by the shift from Euro-Atlantic rhetoric to a nationalist discourse. According to the latest BTI Report the ethnic fragmentation of the political agenda resulted in the lowest level of government activity since the country's European agenda was set, and the most strikingly divergent nationalist positions since the peace was signed in 1995.[10]

The BiH government was officially in place in February 2012. This coalition broke down less than six months later and the new constellation of parties formed a government at state level while the Federation government faced reconstruction. Pursuant to the Basic Directives of BiH foreign policy special attention should be paid to all activities concerning regional cooperation, aiming at further development of good relations, lasting stability, security and economic development.

Two key strategic priorities for BiH are EU and NATO integration. The government adopts strategic plans and documents but these proclaimed goals and measures are rarely fulfilled or implemented. The years 2011 and 2012 were marked by institutional and political obstruction and little progress was visible in fulfilling the EU conditions. BiH signed the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) in 2008, which was ratified by member states in 2010 but the Agreement

---

9   Plus the administration of Brčko District.

10   Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2012 — Bosnia and Herzegovina Country Report, Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2012, p. 3.

did not come into force since the BiH constitution violates the European Convention on Human Rights.[11]

NATO foreign ministers agreed to grant a Membership Action Plan (MAP) to BiH in April 2010 after the intensified dialogue with NATO and a series of measures and conditions were fulfilled. This decision was conditional on resolving the key remaining issue concerning immovable (defence) property. The United States has strongly supported Bosnia's integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions. However, the US role in the country has declined in recent years, particularly after the failure of the constitutional reforms in 2006 and with the increase of the EU's role. This has been followed by a steady decline in US aid. In 2011, Bosnia received 42 million US dollars in aid for political and economic reforms, in 2012 39 million US dollars and in 2013 Bosnia is expected to receive around 28 million US dollars.[12]

With regard to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) BiH signed a stand-by arrangement in 2009. The BiH government outlined the complete structural adjustment package and reforms that should be undertaken in order to receive the credit tranches. The IMF program is crucial also because loans from the World Bank and budgetary support from the EU are conditioned on meeting IMF conditions.

BiH's long-term strategic objective is Euro-Atlantic integration and these integration processes remain the key external drive factor for regional cooperation. The region has been involved in numerous regional initiatives. BiH actively participates in most of them, including the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), the Southeast Europe Cooperation Process (SEECP), the Central European Free Trade

Agreement, the Agreement on the Establishment of a European Common Aviation Area and MARRI. The existence of regional initiatives with different agendas, sometimes overlapping in terms of institutional arrangements and conditions for transposition into domestic law, along with the lack of a clear BiH foreign policy strategy and unresolved internal disputes, exaggerated by dysfunctionality and constitutional arrangements, prevent BiH from participating fully in regional initiatives and defining its interests in the region.

The participation of BiH in numerous regional initiatives, including making progress in resolving disputes arising from the conflict, has changed the dynamics of relations and shows the importance of cooperation in different areas. However, it has not helped in resolving a number of open bilateral disputes with neighbouring countries. This fact is also presented as the key factor influencing the process of shaping the pace of progress in existing regional initiatives. The impact of nationalism on foreign policy in BiH should not be neglected. There are many reasons for the lack of a comprehensive strategy for regional cooperation but internal disputes remain present, in the absence of a common vision concerning the country's future. An external element may be found in the foreign policies and open bilateral issues and issues arising from past conflicts with the countries in the region, namely Croatia and Serbia.

BiH has the largest number of open bilateral disputes with its neighbours. Unresolved issues with Croatia include undefined land and sea borders, property rights, the Neum corridor, energy affairs and labour, social welfare and employment issues. BiH has similar unresolved issues with Serbia in relation to property rights, border issues and communication with regard to war crimes prosecutions. Serbia's »special« relationship with Republika

11   ECtHR judgment in *Sejdić* and *Finci* case.
12   Steven Woehrel, Bosnia: Current Issues and US Policy, February 29, 2012, CRS Report for Congress, Congressional Research Service.

Srpska impacts the relations between the two countries. Sometimes, it appears that relations between Serbia and Republika Srpska are far more constructive than relations between Serbia and BiH, which underlines the powerful ideological pressure that still shapes the position of Serbia towards BiH. The series of unresolved bilateral issues has to be taken into account in assessing the obstacles to regional cooperation. As FPI BH points out in its Comparative Report for 2011, »regional issues tend to be the most ›strained‹ along the bloodiest fault lines resulting from the dissolution of SFRY«.[13]

The general rule is that BiH has resolved bilateral issues with the countries of the Western Balkans that are not in closest geographical proximity and were not directly involved in the conflict and post-war politics. Taking into account geopolitical factors, BiH is functionally interconnected with the region in fields such as trade, transport infrastructure and energy, aiming at maximizing positive developments and managing negative ones, such as trans-border crime, organized crime and drug, arms and human trafficking. The success that has been achieved in regional cooperation in combating organized crime and terrorism may be regarded as a direct result of the fulfilment of EU conditions, evidenced in the creation of a strong institutional network in the region. This institutional framework and mutual regional actions have generated a few inter-state police actions against drug traffickers. Positive examples exist in other areas of cooperation. The Sarajevo Declaration process,[14] for example, shows that it is possible to create similar platforms to (re)establish regional connections based on shared economic and social interests, economic interdependence, sharing the same language group or the same integration aspirations. Although positive developments in the region have been noted more concrete activities beyond declarative commitments are necessary.

Since regional cooperation is an integral part of the Stabilization and Association Process most of the initiatives are externally driven. EU and NATO integration processes remain key drivers for the security, political and economic transformation of the region, as well as major factors fostering regional cooperation. Strong and coherent policies from international actors seem to be critical in terms of ensuring the success of further regional cooperation.

The paper will evaluate selected initiatives in policy areas at BiH level and measure the impact of selected regional initiatives at the national level. The selected policies include: the Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre (SELEC); the Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative (MARRI); the Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative (RAI); the Regional Programme on Social Security Coordination and Social Security Reforms in South-East Europe (RP-SSCSSR); the Centre of Public Employment Services of Southeast European Countries (CPESSEC); and the South-Eastern Europe Health Network (SEEHN). The research does not focus on the level of regional integration.

---

13   Foreign Policy Initiative BH, Monitoring of the BiH European Integration Processes, Comparative Report for 2011 (Western Balkans-Bosnia and Herzegovina), p. 18.

14   Sarajevo process started by Joint Declaration of the Ministers for Refugees and Displaced Persons of Bosnia and Herzegovina, State Union of Serbia and Montenegro and Croatia from the meeting in Sarajevo that was held in January 2005. The declaration reaffirmed relevant conventions on the rights of refugees and established the working body. This body convenes four times a year to discuss the process of implementation of an action plan for providing housing solutions for the refugees in each of the signatory parties' countries.

Country Analysis:
Bosnia and Herzegovina

The initiatives analysed in this paper are characterized by great diversity in terms of their establishment, functioning and effectiveness. The level of influence and effectiveness of the initiatives at the national level, as well as incentives for participation in regional initiatives, differ greatly from one initiative to another. BiH participates in all initiatives for regional cooperation and the diversity is clearly reflected in their implementation at state level. However, a certain level of progressive standardization of the processes of cooperation is also discernible.

The level of implementation of the initiatives in BiH depends on the following factors: the domestic legal system and political disputes, EU conditionality mechanisms and regionally set criteria. Since stabilization forms a key aspect of European integration of the countries in the Western Balkans, the EU has an additional incentive in promoting regional cooperation. Economic, political and security cooperation between the countries in South East Europe will eventually lead to stabilization, reconciliation and overcoming nationalism as the predominant challenges in fostering cooperation after the conflict.

In the circumstances of political turmoil in BiH and the complete lack of progress in European integration it is of interest to research and assess the effectiveness of regional cooperation at the national level to see whether progress is discernible apart from the EU conditionality. The formal implementation of the initiatives was fairly uncomplicated; there is a declared will to participate in initiatives, but practical implementation and taking over ownership remain challenging.

With regard to security initiatives BiH has been involved in the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI)/Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre (SELEC) since the inception of the initiative and an active member in promoting cooperation, signing the Statement of Purpose for the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative.[15] BiH officially became a member of SECI and signed the Convention of the Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre on 9 December 2009, together with other countries.

After MARRI was formed in 2003 by merging the Migration and Asylum Initiative (MAI) and the Regional Return Initiative (RRI), BiH was one of the founding members of the Regional Forum after signing the Tirana Memorandum of Understanding on 2 July 2004, which put the initiative under regional ownership. BiH appointed a national coordinator for cooperation and coordination and a representative at the MARRI Regional Centre. BiH took over the presidency of MARRI from the Republic of Serbia in April 2012, defining the priorities in the field of »legal migration and migration statistics«.

After the Memorandum of Understanding concerning Cooperation in Fighting Corruption the South Eastern European Anti-Corruption Initiative[16] was signed, followed by the Conclusion and Decisions of the Eleventh SPAI Steering Group Meeting,[17] when the Initiative was renamed in accordance with the transformation of the Stability Pact into the Regional Cooperation Council, BiH became a member state of the Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative (RAI). The Secretariat of the Initiative is based in Sarajevo. BiH nominated a Senior Representative for RAI in the RAI Steering Group.

In the area of social development initiatives, BiH signed the Protocol on Partnership in Sofia in 2006, thus promoting exchange of experience between signatories and coopera-

---

15 Signed in Geneva on 6 December 1996.
16 Signed in Zagreb on 13 April 2007.
17 9–10 October 2007.

tion in the field of employment and social security policies.[18] The Head of the BiH Labour and Employment Agency signed the Protocol and Guidelines for Operation of the Centre of Public Employment Services of Southeast European Countries in May 2007,[19] thus laying the foundations for the functioning of Centre, along with other signatory states.

BiH participated in the Regional Programme on Social Security Coordination and Social Security Reforms in South-East Europe (RP-SSCSSR) in the period of its implementation between March 2008 and November 2010. BiH signed the Budva Declaration.

In 2001, a health component was added to the Stability Pact's Social Cohesion Initiative, the South-eastern European Health Network (SEEHN). SEEHN was a political forum set up to coordinate, implement and evaluate commitments of the Dubrovnik Pledge (2001), the Skopje Pledge (2005), the Memorandum of Understanding (2009) and the regional projects for developing health policy and services. The Memorandum of Understanding on the Future of the South-Eastern Europe Health Network in the Framework of the South East European Cooperation Process was signed by the signatories, including BiH, on 22 April 2009.

The research design provides that, after the brief overview of the initiatives in terms of its adoption and establishment, an analysis of the primary sources will be conducted. The information on the actual implementation and level of ownership of regional initiatives is based on information gathered through semi-structured interviews with national focal points and government officials involved in the implementation of the initiatives and experts in the field. While the national focal points were interested in speaking about the

initiative to some extent their view is shaped by the activities that they perform and the need to justify their role.

Cooperation with the national focal points and coordinators was at the satisfactory level, with one exception. It was difficult to schedule the interview, supposedly because of the need to obtain proper authorization for the meeting, including the approval of the BiH Council of Ministers. The experts, on the other hand, were willing to speak about the initiatives but had common criticisms of their effectiveness. This view may be influenced by the common perception that BiH is full of externally driven initiatives and proposals by various international and regional organizations, while the integration process is stagnant and the political will is lacking to move the processes and reforms forward.

Implementation

In relation to the state structure and the impact that it has on the activities of the regional initiatives it is notable that the decision-making process is internally less complex when the state level has competencies (MARRI, or security related issue), in contrast to the social system coordination (where the competencies are in the entities and BD, or cantons) which prevents more coordination at the regional level. More coordination mechanisms should be established within the state, creating coherent coordination mechanisms, a prerequisite for any coordination efforts in the region.

The BiH Ministry of Civil Affairs has a coordinating role in a number of the initiatives included in this study, while the differences are visible in terms of the issues that specific departments deal with in the Ministry (health centre and social security schemes in contrast to the employment agency as a separate administrative unit of the Ministry). Since the BiH Ministry of Civil Affairs has only a coor-

---

18   Sofia conference, 26–27 October 2006.
19   Belgrade conference.

dinating role, decision making lies within the entities and BD (including competences of the cantons in the FBiH). Responsibility for most areas of governance was devolved to lower levels of the state, such as entities and cantons. The BiH Ministry of Civil Affairs, through its Department of Health and Department of Labour, Employment and Social Protection and Pensions plays a key role in coordinating policies within the country by determining the basic principles of coordination of activities, harmonization of the plans of entity authorities and defining a strategy at the international level in the field of health, labour, employment, social protection and pensions, but without any instrument or mandate to pursue implementation. Ministries responsible on the Federation level serve as coordinating or overseeing bodies but lack effective means for coordination and supervision since the realization of policies depends on individual cantons.

Being a member or beneficiary of all analysed initiatives of regional cooperation, BiH created proper structures at the national level which enabled the initiatives to function. The implementation dimension has been analysed in terms of four indicators: legislation, administrative structures, technical infrastructure and practices and procedures.

Legislation

With regard to the legislation the majority of the initiatives did not require formal adoption to become operational. A number of documents concerning regional initiatives, including the documents establishing regional initiatives, went through the regular process of ratification.

The substantive implementation of the initiatives does necessitate a certain level of legislative activity. Most of the issues dealt with within the initiatives or through different pro-

jects that were implemented fall under the EU conditionality regime that necessitates a certain level of legal transformation to become aligned with EU standards. With regard to standards, internationally recognised standards along with the EU defined conditions shape legislative activity in the various areas, including the fight against corruption, migration and asylum.

On the other hand, when it comes to social development initiatives, there is more focus on exchange of experience and best practices, as well as the coordination of activities that obey regionally established standards, which are fairly flexible and usually do not require extensive legislative activity. For example, BiH went through an intensive legislative process to fulfil the Road Map for Visa Liberalisation, in which conditions set by the EU correspond to the core activities of MARRI, including intensive legislative activity related to readmission protocols, readmission agreements and bilateral agreements for combating human trafficking and migrant smuggling.

Drafting laws and procedures tends not to be connected with the activities of the regional initiatives, but rather to be an EU-driven process. For example, a RAI representative stated that, in the process of drafting the relevant laws and anticorruption measures, they tend to rely on internal capacities and the EU as external actor, excluding RAI's influence from legislative drafting.

Anticorruption legislation is influenced by EU standards and RAI is used only as an information exchange channel (for information exchange with colleagues in the region). Bylaws are also of interest in terms of establishing important new institutions such as the Agency for the Prevention of Corruption, whose internal operational rulebook was heavily influenced by the EU. The RAI had no formal role.[20]

---

20   Interview with RAI national coordinator.

A certain level of legislative activity exists under the umbrella of regional initiatives that usually goes beyond EU/international driven legislative activity. One example is the signing of multilateral memorandum of understanding between all six MARRI countries on establishing a system for the exchange of statistical data on illegal migration and participation in the regional early alert system. According to the annual work report[21] BiH State Police regularly delivers monthly statistical reports and quarterly analytical reports.

Most of the initiatives have elaborated Action Plans and Strategies, one exception being RP-SSCSSR. MARRI developed a strategy and action plan covering the period 2011–2013; SELEC issues regular activity reports setting and measuring operational goals; RAI developed a Strategic Document and Work Plan for 2010–2011; CPESSEC publishes national action plans related to employment and gathers statistical data from the member countries; and SEEHN recently published the Israeli presidency's Activity report. States also developed their strategies and action plans in line with the principles of cooperation in specific regional initiatives, including national employment action plans, migration strategies and action plans and anticorruption strategies and action plans. A number of regional initiatives through its expertise, financial contribution and institutions have contributed to the development of important documents, including Migration Profiles as a tool of migration management.

Interviewees tended to underline that the processes of criteria- and standard-setting in the region were externally driven by the mechanisms of EU conditionality; the level of the regional ownership in this field was fairly low. Interviewees agreed that apart from the

strategic documents already mentioned there is no extensive legislative activity at the state level, while constant debate on the distribution of competencies within the state influences the perception that BiH is blocked, a captured state in terms of EU integration and any activities concerning regional integration.

Administrative Structures and Technical Infrastructure

The administrative structure in BiH is complicated by multiple levels of responsibility for the implementation of any policy. There are several functions, roles and responsibilities distributed to different levels of the labour, health and social security administration.

With regard to the regional initiatives analysed here, according to the findings, the establishment of the initiatives at national level had no significant impact on the administration itself. The initiatives analysed here have not resulted in the creation of new units or special bodies/agencies. Existing sectors within the BiH Ministry of Civil Affairs and the Ministry of Security were used or have been adjusted to the activities and issues of the initiatives. One exception to this is the BiH Labour and Employment Agency, which resulted in additional staffing to deal with the issues and activities covered by the regional initiative and the establishment of the Regional Centre for Mental Health within the Ministry of Civil Affairs of BiH in 2010. The Ministry provided the necessary space to accommodate the staff and office equipment.

None of the other initiatives have resulted in additional employment over the years. Issues and activities of the initiatives are usually covered by national coordinators already employed within a specific sector of the Ministry or appointed by the Council of Ministers (SELEC, MARRI). The activities conducted under the regional initiative usually correspond to

---

21   Annual Report of the Coordination Body for Monitoring of the Implementation of the Migration Strategy and Action Plan, February 2012.

the terms of reference of the person in charge of the initiative and thus no additional personnel is nominated to perform any of the duties related to regional efforts. In some cases, the job that the relevant person performs within the competent ministry (advisor for anticorruption, for example) corresponds to the subject matter in question (RAI initiative-national coordinator). In principle, BiH delegated staff to regional initiatives on the basis of the conclusions of the BiH Council of Ministers (SELEC, MARRI and RAI), while other initiatives under analysis – including RP-SSCSSR and CPESSEC – do not require secondment but are either project-based or are institutionally represented.

The implementation of regional initiatives at the national level in some cases lacks additional infrastructure and funding, for example for the purchase of IT equipment or the creation/maintenance of websites for countries. For the majority of the initiatives no new facilities were built and administrative and technical capacities have hardly been increased compared to the capacities before the establishment of regional cooperation.

The exception is found within SEEHN where important material, technical and administrative support was provided to the Regional Health Development Centre for Mental Health by the WHO Regional Office, the Council of Europe, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and other donors. Although funding came from donors (externally driven), the Ministry provided material resources, namely offices and one person in charge of managing the Centre.

According to the findings and assessment of the initiatives there has been no significant progress in strengthening administrative capacity at the national level and in establishing mechanisms for monitoring and analysing implementation. For SEEHN, monitoring, evaluation and decision making lie within the

Ministry of Health and Social Welfare of Republika Srpska and the Ministry of Health of FBiH. SELEC and the Employment Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina represent an exception due to the specific area of activities.

In order to achieve more efficient implementation of Social Security Agreements with Serbia and Slovenia on all levels, the Employment Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina had to boost technical capacity. Besides electronic data exchange, the protocol with Serbia provides for shortening of deadlines for the administration of requests from 60 to 30 days, and with Slovenia even within 15 days. In the first half of 2012, the Labour and Employment Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina processed 2,556 applications from the Republic of Slovenia, the Republic of Serbia, Republic of Montenegro and the Republic of Austria, acting in accordance with effective agreements on social security and within its competences. The SELEC national coordinator uses the premises of the Interpol office and is employed in the office. The national liaison officer for SELEC is from the RS Ministry of the Interior and uses the resources available within the Ministry. The MARRI national coordinator uses the premises of the Ministry of Security of BiH and the MARRI committee member comes from the BiH Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

At the state level there is no central decision-making body for labour and employment, health and social security matters. The Ministry of Civil Affairs (through its Labour, Employment, Health, Social Protection and Pensions Departments) plays a coordinating role and is responsible for international cooperation in these matters. Design, implementation and enforcement of legislation are the responsibilities of the entities, including cantons in the BiH Federation.

Compared to the other initiatives, only the CPESSEC is institutionally structured and the

BiH Employment Agency is a member. The administration of the BiH State Employment Agency is overseen by an Advisory Board composed of one representative of the government of each entity and of Brčko District and three members appointed by the Ministry of Civil Affairs.

The BiH State Employment Agency has autonomous legal status. Some of its functions are coordinated with the Ministry of Civil Affairs, while others are assigned neither to the BiH State Employment Agency nor to the Ministry of Civil Affairs and are exclusively in the competence of the entity or cantonal level.

National-level working meetings are rarely organised solely for the purpose of preparation for regional meetings. With regard to, for example, the BiH Employment Agency, national meetings are – in consultation with the advisory board – on a more regular basis. Most of the meetings are organised within the scope of regular duties and can be described as ad hoc and on an as-needed basis. Informal consultation is not rare. As preparation for regional meetings, practice shows that, due to the complexity of competences at different levels of administration it is not uncommon to seek approval from the entity level authorities and consult them prior to taking any decision. This process usually has formal elements, including ministerial conferences. Since the national meetings are rarely organised to include national stakeholders it comes as no surprise that the BiH Agency for Prevention of Corruption has no contacts with the RAI Secretariat or with senior representatives.

Some of the analysed initiatives have included civil society organizations in their work at national level. This is visible in the work of the BiH State Employment Agency where consultation meetings with NGOs are on an ad hoc basis, for example with CCI (Centre for Civil Initiative) in Sarajevo or within the

BiH Ministry of Security, which has regular consultations with Transparency International BiH. Nevertheless, the concept of partnership at the national level has not yet gained full acceptance. BiH still lacks the culture of consultations and dialogue with NGOs and other civil structures at the national level. The process of consultation is rather ad hoc than formalized and structured.

At the national level, activities with NGOs are rather limited to invitations on conferences or seminars. Institutions and interviewees stated that they remain open to cooperation with civil society, but, according to the findings, civil society organisations have no effective participation in the work of institutions or working-level meetings. The majority of respondents recognize the need for including civil society on a more regular basis. Cooperation and consultation with civil society is underdeveloped in BiH.

Local Ownership

The second dimension analysed in the research covers issues such as resources, agenda setting, know how, decision making and the role of civil society.

Resources

The allocation of resources by the participating states in the regional initiative bodies is regulated by the founding acts of the initiative and follow different formulas, depending on how the structure and organisation of the initiative is shaped. Regarding resources, MARRI provides that each member state's share in the total budget is determined in proportion to its GDP.

According to the Memorandum of Understanding the member states of the SEEHN initiative are divided into four categories regarding their contribution to the total annual budget. BiH falls in the second group,

while the actual resources were not allocated since the last instrument on ratification was deposited only recently. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Finance are in charge of the implementation of international obligations, including the provision of financial contributions in various initiatives. Interviewees do not expect any delays or disputes in providing the BiH's contribution to SEEHN. BiH regularly makes financial contributions to the SELEC and RAI initiatives. In terms of financial resources for the regular activities of initiatives it is not uncommon practice that the presiding country bears all expenses for organising meetings/forums.

Agenda Setting

Agenda setting is an important aspect of local ownership and the ability of national institutions to put issues on the agenda is a significant benefit of regional initiatives. At the regional level, the agenda is usually proposed by respective secretariats of the initiative where countries have the possibility to nominate the issues that they consider of importance. The agenda-setting process is also shaped by the presiding/chairing country. This is the case with MARRI (BiH is presiding at the time of writing this report and the agenda is set in line with the priorities of the Presidency).[22]

In accordance with the Guidelines on CPESSEC, the meetings are held twice a year, and other states may initiate meetings on a particular topic, if necessary. The agenda setting is rather flexible within CPESSEC. RAI Steering Committee meetings are held once a year, with one preparatory meeting before the regional meeting takes place, at which the agenda is discussed, usually proposed by the secretariat. Regular communication via

e-mail was also pointed out in the interview with the RAI representative as a useful tool for communication regarding the issues to be put on the agenda. Respondents in general agreed that there is no obstacle for the country to propose the issues to be discussed on the agenda, although in some cases representatives feel that all issues were exhausted and forums with different topics seem void of substance.[23] With regard to SELEC, agenda setting seems to be more operational in nature and each national coordinator feels free to nominate issues to be discussed.

The national agenda setting and implementation in the area of social development initiatives is fairly constrained by the administrative structure of BiH, multiple levels of responsibility and a highly politicized environment that denies local ownership at the national/state level. According to the interviewees, it is even questionable whether the establishment of the Regional Centre for Mental Health in Bosnia would be possible under these political circumstances. Operations, agenda setting, knowhow and decision making lie within the entities and are made by the relevant ministries.

CPESSEC represents a somewhat special case since the BiH Employment Agency has autonomous legal status; decisions at the national level are made in cooperation (consultation) with the advisory board. As already mentioned, agenda setting or nominating the issues to be discussed at national level seem to be constrained by the lack of coordination channels within the country. Some respondents stated that for such a decision it is necessary to consult entity institutions that influence the ability of representatives to participate fully in agenda setting. The exceptions are RAI, MARRI and CPESSEC.

---

22 In the interview regarding MARRI a worrying fact was brought up regarding agenda setting. The respondent stated that »we feel that we do not have any issues to propose, we simply have no ideas on what to discuss anymore«.

23 Interview with the Ministry of Security with regard to the MARRI initiative and the upcoming forum to be held in Sarajevo.

The Regional Centre on Mental Health in Bosnia, as a flagship project, has become an undisputed success and model of local ownership thanks to the commitment of the (staff) institutions involved. Mental health has been accepted by all levels (state, entities and Brčko) as a priority within the national framework. Devastated by war, the country has regarded mental health care as one of high priority in the difficult process of rebuilding the society and presented itself as driving force for mental health service reform across the country and the region.. Despite obvious shortcomings in reforms of mental health care, in the opinion of our interviewees,[24] the clear focus and the prioritization of mental health care on the political agenda have resulted in achievements and improvements over the years. The establishment and functioning of the Centre (project-based) was provided through significant and continuous material, technical and administrative support from the donors, something not to be found within the scope of other initiatives.

In 2009, Bosnia and Herzegovina presided over CPESSEC. During its presidency two directors' conferences and two expert conferences were organized and financed by the BiH Employment Agency. With regard to the agenda, the respondent stated that a questionnaire was developed and sent to all member states in order to provide for more openness in the agenda setting. After the BiH presidency ended, this practice was not used by the presidencies of other states, which have only sent out draft agendas. BiH used the chairmanship to bring onto the agenda of regional initiatives issues from national level that the Agency considered priorities, including: expanding the list of statistical information to enhance the statistical bulletin and co-

operation among the employment agencies. This forum is used to address some bilateral issues, including the agreements on social security in relation to unemployment and employment agreements. All respondents agree that internal coordination and communication within BiH's administrative structures could be improved in order to participate effectively in the regional initiatives.

Depending on the competencies prescribed by the BiH Constitution, decision-making processes differ from initiative to initiative. Decision-making processes are also dependent on the structures established in particular initiatives (the RAI coordinator has decision-making capacity in the Steering Group; the Employment Agency consults with the Ministry of Civil Affairs; and the SELEC national coordinator has the capacity to make decisions on operative and technical issues related to specific actions conducted through the Centre). While in the area of health regular coordination meetings are held in the form of conferences of ministers of health (state, entities and BD level), which predisposes that any activity undertaken by the state in the regional arena has to have approval from the entities and BD, this is not the case in situations in which the state has more than a coordinating role (MARRI, RAI, SELEC). With regard to CPESSEC, prior to taking a position, the BiH Agency coordinates with the Ministry of Civil Affairs and entity and BD services. The influence of NGOs on agenda setting at the national and entity level is very limited, if not absent. Influence or cooperation is rather reduced to identification of the issue to be discussed.

Prior consensus of all levels of government and internal political disputes may have consequences in terms of use of the available resources and opportunities available through regional initiatives. The example is the RHDC on Human Organ and Transplant Medicine in

---

24   Interview, Ministry of Civil Affairs, Health Department and SEEHN.

Zagreb, Croatia, whose resources and benefits are not used by BiH. BiH has two separate political representatives for this issue (one from FBiH and one from RS) and two action plans for transplant medicine and no link at the state level (namely, there is no BiH Ministry of Health). Lack of political consensus, inadequate legal framework and the lack of connection to Euro Transplant Network prevent BiH from fully using the transplantation expertise in Croatia, despite the demand in the country and the lack of capacity for the transplantation of organs and tissue in BiH.

According to the findings the majority of interviewees from the social development initiatives underline that the variety of stakeholders involved on different levels make the process of local ownership more complex and difficult. Most of the knowledge and skills for effective promotion and public communication on the national and lower levels are lacking.

Gender Issues

The third and cross cutting dimension in the study is gender representation and gender mainstreaming. Unsurprisingly, taking into account the overall representation of women in public life in BiH, men are predominantly represented in regional initiatives as national coordinators, liaison officers and senior officials (including ministers). In this regard RP SSCSSR and SEEHN are exceptions, where women are nominated as representatives.

The CPESSEC representative stated that gender mainstreaming is included in the design and implementation of employment policies (this also includes positive measures to tackle unemployment and women entrepreneurship programmes). With regard to RAI, the respondent stated that gender mainstreaming was not considered as important in the design of anticorruption policies and is

not included in the initiatives and activities. The lack of representation of women in leading managerial positions in the administration leads to the conclusion that there has been no consideration in any of the initiatives to include gender-related issues in their work and policies.

Conclusions and Recommendations

BiH has established the administrative structures necessary for the implementation of regional initiatives. A certain level of local ownership exists, but Bosnia and Herzegovina should put regional initiatives higher on the political agenda and ensure that they are reflected in the policies and strategies of the governments.

The complex and expensive state structure resulting from the constitutional arrangements is a major barrier to the necessary social and structural reforms. The administrative structure in BiH is complicated by multiple levels of responsibility for the implementation of any policy. Several functions, roles and responsibilities are distributed to different levels of administration. According to the findings of this research, the system does not add to the maximum benefit of the end user. In the initiatives where the state has more than a coordinating role (MARRI, RAI, SELEC) the decision-making process is easier, enabling BiH to position itself within regional initiatives, while for the other initiatives any activity undertaken by the state in the regional arena has to have approval from the entities and BD. Knowledge and skills for effective promotion and public communication at the national level are lacking.[25]

BiH presents a highly specific and highly po-

---

25   In the interview with the expert on migration, SELEC was mentioned, while the respondent stated, »I was not sure if that still works«, while in the interview with the AC Agency the director and deputy director were not officially introduced to RAI.

liticized environment that exerts pressure on the public administration. The Bosnian public administration is still struggling to conform to the principles of transparency, efficiency and impartiality. More coordination mechanisms should be included within the state, creating coherent coordination mechanisms. This is a prerequisite of any coordination efforts in the region.

With regard to personnel and training, the importance of employing specialized personnel and training will be important factors for the future. The implementation of regional initiatives at the national level lacks additional infrastructure and enough funding, for example, for the purchase of IT equipment or the creation of national websites. In the context of some key challenges, the absence of key institutions that would have the capacity to collect and analyse data is a challenge.

The differences in the capacities of different institutions at different levels of administration and lack of coordination in the provision of timely data collection have been identified as a challenge. In addition, as expressed by the Employment Agency, the country faces the problem of unreliable data. Any figures, whether on workforce, migration or population, are rough estimates. The last census was undertaken in 1991, before the onset of the war.

The role of national coordinators is growing in importance as the country is progressing towards EU integration. The operations and visibility of the regional initiative at the national level is based on individual initiative and individual motivation by national coordinators within the administrative structure.

Regular meetings at the national level should become a forum for the national stakeholders to discuss and push the relevant issues on the agenda of the regional initiatives.

Regional initiatives should increase its visibility and define outreach activities.[26] Assessing the effectiveness of initiatives is a challenge, especially in BiH, with many international and national actors influencing the process. Nevertheless, the fact that management of Anticorruption agency was not introduced to RAI, although the Secretariat and senior representative are in Sarajevo, illustrates the complete lack of communication and coordination at the national level.

A number of activities are organised under the umbrella of regional initiatives. Organising seminars, conferences and meetings could indeed be useful for experience exchange but too much money and effort is invested in the regional initiatives and its secretariats for them to become »training centres«.

It would be of crucial importance to shape the future activities to presuppose substantial involvement of national counterparts (who will do national needs assessments) and shape the proper follow-up activities, making the role of national counterparts more substantial. Gender mainstreaming remains a challenge for all policies developed under the umbrella of regional initiatives. Showing the benefits of regional networking and cooperation in technical and operational issues may eventually lead to greater political cooperation and increase local ownership of regional initiatives.

---

26   Ibidem.

References

Annual Report of the Coordination Body for Monitoring of the Implementation of the Migration Strategy and Action Plan, February 2012.

Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2012 — Bosnia and Herzegovina Country Report. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2012.

BiH Work and Employment Agency, http://arz.gov.ba/Default.aspx?template_id=87&pageIndex=1

Centre of Public Employment Services of Southeast European Countries, www.cpessec.org.

Conclusion and Decisions of the 11th (SPAI) Steering Group Meeting, Podgorica, available at: http://www.rai-see.org/images/doc/32/Conclusions%20and%20Decisions%20of%2011th%20Steering%20Group%20meeting.pdf

Convention of the Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre, Bucharest, available at: http://www.selec.org/docs/PDF/SELEC%20Convention%20%5Bsigned%20on%202009.12.2009%5D.pdf

Dubrovnik Pledge, Dubrovnik, 2.9.2001; available at: http://seehnsec.blogspot.com/p/ dubrovnik-pledge.html

Foreign Policy Initiative BH, Monitoring of the BiH European Integration Processes, Comparative Report for 2011 (Western Balkans-Bosnia and Herzegovina).

Memorandum of Understanding concerning Cooperation in Fighting Corruption through the South Eastern European Anti-Corruption Initiative, Zagreb, available at: http://www.rai-see.org/images/doc/32/Memorandum%20of%20understanding.pdf

Memorandum of Understanding on the Establishment of the Regional Forum of the Migration, Asylum

and Refugees Return Initiative, Tirana, available at: http://www.marri-rc.org/upload/Documents/MARRI%20Main%20Documents/MoU%20on%20Establishment%20of%20 MARRI%20Regional%20Forum%20-%202%20July%202004.pdf

Memorandum of Understanding on the Future of the South-Eastern Europe Health Network in the Framework of the South East European Co-operation Process, available at: http:// seehnsec.blogspot.com/p/memorandum-of-understanding-2009.html

Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative, www.marri-rc.org.

Ministry of Civil Affairs of BiH, www.mcp.gov.ba

Ministry of Security of BiH, www.msb.gov.ba.

Partnership Protocol on establishment of the Centre of Public Employment Services of Southeast European Countries, Sofia, 27.10.2006.

Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative, www.rai-see.org.

Southeast European Cooperative Initiative/Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre, www.secicenter.org.

South-Eastern Europe Health Network, seehnsec.blogspot.com.

Statement of Purpose for the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative, Geneva, 6.12.1996.

Woehrel, Steven, »Bosnia: Current Issues and US Policy«, February 29, 2012, CRS Report for Congress, Congressional Research Service.

Interviews

INTERPOL NCB SARAJEVO, National focal point for SELEC held on 23 November 2012.

RCC Sarajevo, Expert, Justice and Home Affairs unit, 23 November 2012.

Director, BiH Agency for Prevention of Corruption, 22 November 2012.

Deputy Director, BiH Agency for Prevention of Corruption, 22 November 2012.

RAI Senior Representative, BiH Ministry of Security, 22 November 2012.

Expert Advisor on Legal and Legislative issues, contact for CPESSEC, BiH Agency for Labour and Employment, 23 November 2012.

Head of Health Department, Ministry of Civil Affairs, contact for SEEHN, 21 November 2012.

RCMH coordinator, Ministry of Civil Affairs, 21 November 2012.

Migration expert, interview, 15 November 2012.

Assistant Minister for Labour, Social Security and Pensions, Ministry of Civil Affairs, 30 November 2012.

SSCSSR Local Programme officer, 30 November 2012.

MARRI and SELEC contact point, Assistant Minister, Head of Sector for International Relations and European Integration, Ministry of Security, 18 January 2013.

Monitoring Regional Cooperation in South East Europe:

Croatia

Sandro Knezović

Introduction

Since gaining its independence from Yugoslavia in 1991, Croatia has experienced significant political, economic and societal changes, shaped both internally and externally, which have influenced the state's and its citizens' ability and motivation to develop regional cooperation. After the initial state-building process was obstructed by armed conflict, the peace accords of 1995 brought the first breakthrough, although it was only the fall of the semi-authoritarian Tudjman regime opened the road to democracy and state consolidation.

Since 2000, four election cycles have taken place in Croatia. Crucial political changes and the process of accession to the Euro-Atlantic community were initiated by the Social Democratic Party-led coalition between 2000 and 2003, the same one that won the election in December 2011. Meanwhile, in 2003 the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) returned to power. The two HDZ governments (2003–2007, 2007–2011) continued European integration and democratic consolidation; however, the processes have been noticeably slowed down by abuses of power and corruption.

Croatia is to become a European Union Member State on 1 July 2013, after applying for EU membership in 2003, finalizing the negotiations and signing the Accession Treaty in 2011. In the 2012 referendum, 67 per cent expressed support for EU membership. After joining the Partnership for Peace in 2000 and developing further cooperation within the framework of the Membership Action Plan, Croatia became a NATO member in 2009.[27]

The close cooperation with the EU over the past decade has resulted in major progress discernible in the fields of minority rights, return of refugees, judicial reform and the fight against crime and corruption. Along with the strong impact of the conditionality mechanism, the CARDS and IPA programmes provided significant support for reconstruction, development and stabilization within the country and stimulated regional cooperation. The assistance of NATO, on the other hand, has encouraged the processes of Security Sector Reform in Croatia, and Croatian forces contribute to the NATO-led missions in Kosovo and Afghanistan.

Significant political and economic interests related to the transitional character of the countries in the region, as well as the conditionality mechanisms and issues shared by all of them, push Croatia to develop regional cooperation. Moreover, the major threats to Croatia's vital interests, such as organized crime, border safety, small arms and light weapons smuggling, drugs and human trafficking, and crucial economic interests, such as energy supply diversification, transport and infrastructure development or environmental

---

27   Accession to both the EU and NATO was hindered by two critical issues: cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and the border dispute with Slovenia.

sustainability are of a highly transnational nature, whereas their dynamics are recognizable more intensively within South East Europe than outside it. Furthermore, the full integration of the Croatian market with the European one and the obligation to leave the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) will result in increased prices of Croatian goods in the region and difficulties for entrepreneurs from the region in entering the Croatian market. In order to overcome these stumbling blocks it remains crucial for the Croatian government to negotiate ways to keep the current benefits of CEFTA with the other Agreement members.

The Croatian cultural identity reflects its turbulent history and geopolitical location over the centuries, with the constant meeting of the Balkan, Mediterranean and Central European (Austro-Hungarian) influences. This historical and cultural proximity, the openness of Croatia to Europe and multidimensional cultural self-perception links Croatian society at least as much with Central Europe and the Mediterranean as with the Western Balkan region. However, the lack of a language barrier among the majority of the nations within South East Europe significantly supports regional cooperation and the importance of Croatian experiences in structural reforms and accession to the EU and NATO has created major potential for win–win cooperation at the regional level.

The geographical position of Croatia simultaneously encourages and impedes regional cooperation. With a coastline of almost 2,000 kilometres and the northernmost location in the region, the country remains a border state of the area; however, the border of over 1,000 kilometres with Bosnia and Herzegovina and that of over 300 kilometres with Serbia makes regional stability an issue of a great importance. Similarly, the presence of major Croatian communities in Bosnia and

Herzegovina, Serbia and in Montenegro requires the broad cooperation of Croatia with the governments, organizations and civil societies in the region.

Country Analysis: Croatia

The initiatives of regional cooperation analysed in the study are characterized by great diversity when it comes to the way they were established, the period when they were founded, their ways of functioning and their effectiveness and real influence on national processes and institutions. Croatia participates or has participated in all of the considered initiatives of regional cooperation and the abovementioned diversity is reflected in their implementation at the state level. However, constant progressive standardization of the processes of cooperation is also noticeable. Implementation of the initiatives in Croatia is framed by three crucial factors: the internal legal system, strong conditionality mechanisms and, finally, the regionally set criteria. The first and the last are significantly influenced by the second. Since the regionally set standards are usually based on European ones and represent specific answers to conditionality, and the Croatian legal system is to a great extent already synchronized with the *acquis communautaire*, the formal implementation of the initiatives has been fairly uncomplicated, whereas practical implementation remains challenging.

In the field of justice and home affairs, Croatia has cooperated with the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI)/Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre (SELEC) already since signing the Statement of Purpose for the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative in Geneva on 6 December 1996, whereas initially Croatia, together with Slovenia, insisted on participating in the Initiative as observers, mainly due to the reluctance

of political elites towards regional – Southeast European – cooperation and Tudjman's perception of Croatia as a »Catholic-Mediterranean country in Central Europe«, according to Richard Shifter, a US diplomat involved in the creation of SECI. Croatia became a full-fledged member of SECI shortly after President Tudjman's death and signed the Convention of the Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre on 9 December 2009, together with other countries.

After the Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative (MARRI) was established in 2003 by merging the Migration and Asylum Initiative (MAI) and the Regional Return Initiative (RRI), Croatia was one of the founding members of the Regional Forum after signing the Tirana Memorandum of Understanding on 2 July 2004, which put the initiative under regional ownership.

After the Memorandum of Understanding concerning Cooperation in Fighting Corruption through the South Eastern European Anti-Corruption Initiative was signed in Zagreb on 13 April 2007, and followed by the Conclusion and Decisions of the Eleventh Stability Pact Anticorruption Initiative (SPAI) Steering Group Meeting of 9–10 October 2007, when the Initiative was renamed in accordance with the transformation of the Stability Pact to the Regional Cooperation Council, Croatia became a member state of the Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative (RAI).

In the field of social development initiatives, Croatia signed the Partnership Protocol on establishment of the Centre of Public Employment Services of Southeast European Countries (CPESSEC) together with the other parties in Sofia on 27 October 2006. It was also a beneficiary party of the Regional Programme on Social Security Coordination and Social Security Reforms in South-East Europe (RP-SSCSSR) during the whole period of its implementation between March 2008 and November 2010.

Although the legally binding document on establishment of the South-Eastern Europe Health Network (SEEHN) – the Memorandum of Understanding on the Future of the South-Eastern Europe Health Network within the Framework of the South-East European Cooperation Process – was signed by the parties (including Croatia) only on 22 April 2009, the Dubrovnik Pledge of 2 September 2001 is usually viewed as the initiation of cooperation within the framework of the network. Croatia was also signatory.

After the factual background of the regional frameworks of cooperation and Croatia's participation in them has been presented, the following part of the paper is based mainly on primary sources obtained through semi-structured interviews with officials involved in implementation of the initiatives at the national level and experts dealing with relevant fields of regional cooperation. While the officials showed a great willingness to talk about the initiatives and discuss the Croatian involvement in regional cooperation, the platforms of cooperation seem not to be an interesting subject for researchers, neither those dealing with regional cooperation in the Western Balkan region nor those dealing with the particular issues that are the objects of cooperation. The authors noticed a significant difference during the attempts to find experts for the initiatives related to the field of justice and home affairs and the field of social development initiatives. It was fairly easy to find experts able to speak about the first group, while it appeared impossible to find scholars dealing with the second.

Implementation

While being a full member or beneficiary of the initiatives of regional cooperation, Croatia had to create proper structures and capabilities at the national level to enable the ini-

tiatives to function. The development of the structures and capabilities has been analysed in accordance with four indicators: legislation, administrative structures, technical infrastructure and practices and procedures.

The majority of the initiatives did not directly require new legislation to be passed in Croatia. The only one that created a need for a new law at the national level was SELEC. The Law on Ratification of the SELEC Convention came into force in October 2011 after the convention had been signed almost two years earlier, following the transformation from SECI to SELEC. The Croatian Ministry of Finance was the body responsible for drafting the legislation. The implementation of the initiatives themselves and development of policies supported by them remain indirectly related to development of new legislation in the fields covered by the initiatives' activities, however. On one hand, the initiatives have supported implementation of new laws required within the framework of the European conditionality mechanisms, such as the laws on asylum or numerous anti-corruption legal acts, whereas on the other hand some of the initiatives – such as the already completed RP-SSCSSR – have resulted in the establishment of new cooperation initiatives at the regional level, in this particular case the EU twinning project »Strengthening the administrative capacity of competent authorities and implementation agencies for coordination of social security schemes« initiated by Croatia, whose implementation was successfully finalized in January 2013. The objective of this project – worth Euro 1,000,000 – was to increase the institutional and administrative capacity of the competent authorities and implementation agencies to effectively coordinate social security schemes upon EU accession. It has achieved its objective of strengthening the administrative capacity of the Croatian authorities and implementation agencies to

implement the acquis in the area of the free movement of workers and coordination of social security.[28]

All of the interviewees underlined that the lack of new legislation related to the implementation of the initiatives is strongly correlated with the advanced stage of Croatia's EU accession. This meant that the majority of legislation had already been synchronized with international criteria and standards before the initiatives themselves had been established. Moreover, the wide spectrum of regionally set criteria is an effect of former bi- and multilateral agreements, on one hand, and commonly internationally recognized criteria, on the other. Whereas the first group is strongly visible in the field of employment services and social security coordination, the second is particularly noticeable in the case of international police cooperation and international medical standards. The legislation has been drafted throughout the years by various state bodies, mainly the government itself and relevant ministries. The abovementioned processes made the legislation at the national level in Croatia consistent with the European legal system and the regionally set criteria, whereas the respondents tended to underline that the processes of criteria- and standard-setting in the region were externally driven by the mechanisms of EU conditionality and the level of regional ownership in this field was rather low.[29]

---

28   For details see the info on the official website of the Central Finance and Contracting Agency at http://www.safu.hr/en/news/the-ministry-of-labour-and-pension-system-closing-ceremony-of-the-twinning-project (accessed on 10 January 2013).
29   In particular, the legislation in the field of fight against corruption, migration, asylum and refugees, but also that related to social security reforms, was subject to formulation from outside the region (in line with the *acquis communautaire*) because the regional initiatives themselves should serve to, among other purposes, prepare the countries for the advanced stages of EU accession process and EU membership. Information acquired at the interviews with Croatian representatives in RAI, MARRI and RP SSCSSR. Zagreb, September 2012.

The interviewees consistently agreed that there is no need for more concrete legal acts and assess the existing ones as sufficient and flexible enough. The action plans are introduced by all of the initiatives with the exception of the Regional Programme on Social Security Coordination and Social Security Reforms. Some of the initiatives have long-term action plans, such as the CPESSEC, while the majority apply action plans only for particular projects.

According to the findings of this research, the establishment of the aforementioned initiatives has not had a significant impact on administrative structures in Croatia. None of them has directly resulted in the creation of new units or bodies and for all of them existing units and bodies have been used and/or adjusted. These have been mainly numerous units in various ministries dealing with the issues and fields covered by the activities of the specific initiative, whereas usually more than one unit in more than one body has participated in implementation. Two cases seem to be sui generis when it comes to administrative structures. The activities of SELEC, as a continuation of SECI, are coordinated by exactly the same bodies as SECI, although the scope of responsibilities has changed slightly. The other interesting case is the RP-CSCSSR. As already mentioned, the programme itself has finished. However, the institutions involved in the conduct of the programme[30] are now developing a national-level twinning project that aims at continuation of the achievements of the RP CSCSSR. Given that no new units or bodies have been set up, the European Commission has warned about potential problems

of insufficient administrative capacity. In accordance with given recommendation, in 2010 special units were established in every state administrative body taking part in the aforementioned endeavour.

Moreover, none of the initiatives has resulted in extra employment. Not much development is observed either in the field of staff secondment; only SELEC represents an exception in that regard and Croatian representatives from various state bodies (the Ministry of the Interior, the Croatian Customs Directorate and the Croatian Customs and Police Liaison Officer in Budapest) are delegated to SELEC regional bodies. The lack of seconded staff in regional bodies dealing with regional initiatives is explained by the interviewees in two different ways: they either underline that the regional bodies are very small and there is no need for seconded staff from each of the member states or highlight the need for more seconded staff from Croatia and criticize the general poor development of staff secondment in Croatia.

Few changes have been introduced in the field of technical infrastructure, either. For the purposes of operation of the initiatives, no new facilities were purchased, rent or built. For the majority of the initiatives also the technical capacities have not been increased when compared to the capacities of the responsible bodies before establishment of the frameworks for cooperation. Eventual purchases have been rather of a common nature and related to software updating or replacement of old equipment. Again, SELEC represents an exception in that area. Due to the specific area of activities, the provision of secure channels of communication was strongly required for effective functioning of the initiative and all necessary devices have been purchased. Moreover, the representatives of SEEHN underline a great need for new specialist technical devices, which would allow more dynamic

---

30   These institutions were: the Ministry of Economy, Labour and Entrepreneurship; the Ministry of Health and Social Policy; the Ministry of Family, War Veterans and Intergenerational Solidarity; the Ministry of Finance; the Croatian Pension Insurance Institute; the Croatian Institute for Health Insurance; and the Croatian Employment Insurance Institute.

research development in the region; however, they are also aware of the financial limits of the Croatian party in the initiative.

The practices and procedures for implementation of the regional initiative do not differ significantly from one to another, neither the national-level working meetings nor the inclusion of civil society organizations in the activities of the initiatives. The meetings at national level within the framework of all of the initiatives are basically organized on an as-needed basis (both regarding frequency and level of organization), usually a few times a year. However, within RAI there are hardly any national meetings; only when some event is organized, such as the 2012 Summer School for Junior Magistrates from South-Eastern Europe in Opatija (Croatia). Also, to date, SEEHN has not organized any meeting of a more strategic and inclusive character than working meetings, although it was planning one in autumn 2012. On the other hand, the specific field of SEEHN's activities means that working meetings of small teams are organized extremely frequently, even a few times a week. The national-level meetings are usually initiated by relevant ministries on the level of directorates or divisions; however, if needed, project managers and national coordinators also initiate the meetings. In general, the meetings are organized at managerial level in all of the initiatives; however, their structure is very flexible. All of the respondents underline that when needed representatives of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs also participate in the meetings. Moreover, the meetings are attended by external experts and consultants when their inputs seem to be required. Obviously, the practices and procedures seem to be more flexible and are organized on as-needed basis, depending pretty much on the initiative in question and its momentum.

Some of the analysed initiatives have included civil society organizations in their work and have conducted consultations with them; however, the processes are ad hoc rather than formalized and structured. Only MARRI works with CSOs on a regular basis and includes them in almost all its activities, whereas the other initiatives either do not do it at all at national level (SELEC, RAI), or include them in their activities only in a very limited way, such as joint events (conferences, summer schools, workshops) or programme implementation (mainly in the field of social policies). In none of the initiatives are CSOs included or consulted during the decision-making process. The majority of respondents do not recognize a need for including civil society in the practices of initiatives of regional cooperation. According to information gathered from the interviews, this may be explained either by limited opportunities to include CSO representatives due to the format and way of functioning of some initiatives or with the way CSOs perceive the initiatives themselves and, accordingly, the extent of their motivation to participate.

Local Ownership

The second dimension analysed in the research is local ownership, including such areas of operation as resources, agenda setting, know-how, eagerness of the state and decision making. The variety of stakeholders involved in regional cooperation in the Western Balkan region undoubtedly to some extent stimulates consolidation of the region, although on the other hand it confuses the paths of regional ownership and makes the process of ownership handover more complex and difficult.

The solutions regarding financial resources in the analysed initiatives of regional cooperation vary significantly. As some budgets do not include any resources from the national level and local ownership does not exist in this dimension at all, such as in the case of

the RP-SSCSSR, the majority of the organizations include national contributions in their budgets. However, the amounts and ways of contributing are not coherent. In some cases, as in RAI and SELEC all member states contribute the same amount of money, agreed by the regional bodies of the organizations. The level of the contribution oscillates around several tens of thousands of euros annually. Some other initiatives have adopted similar solutions, whereas, despite the annual equal contribution, particular member states additionally contribute to particular projects that they are interested in (MARRI). A significantly different solution has been introduced in SSEHN, where the national contribution is defined in the Memorandum as a percentage of GDP. The member states of the Health Network have been divided into four groups by their GDP at purchasing power parity and the country contribution is set as a percentage of the overall costs. Croatia has been placed in the third group, with GDP at purchasing power parity over 50 billion US dollars and it covers 15 per cent of the costs, which makes 30,000 euros annually.

Agenda setting is another indicator that represents the level of local ownership and differentiates the initiatives farther. In some of them the national meetings are hardly organized, as in RAI, and if already organized they have a clearly task-oriented character and the agenda is obviously related to the purpose of the meeting. In all the other cases the agenda-setting process is rather flexible and no standardized procedures are implemented. However, in some of the initiatives the process is visibly more centralized than in the others. Within the framework of the majority of initiatives agenda setting is conducted at the managerial level in the relevant ministries; however, some significant differences are noticeable. For example, in SEEHN the agenda is usually set by the programme coordinator

and the relevant minister, whereas in the other ones the responsibility is dispersed within the structure of the ministries and everybody engaged in implementation of the initiative has the right to propose an issue to be discussed at the national meeting. The case of CPESSEC shows, however, that the responsibility for agenda setting does not have to be at the ministerial level, but may be passed to lower levels. In this particular example it is usually done by the Head of Project Implementation Department at the Croatian Employment Service in cooperation with internal and external experts. On the other hand, the case of MARRI proves the importance of regional bodies in national agenda-setting processes and the MARRI Regional Centre based in Skopje is recognized as an influential actor where agenda setting at the Croatian national level is concerned.

The agenda setting for the regional meetings is much more coherent across the considered initiatives. The final responsibility usually is in the hands of the regional body (secretariat, council, centre, etc.), whereas all the member states have the right to propose certain subjects to be discussed and this is usually done at the level of program coordinator, high level managers in ministries or ministers themselves.

As already mentioned, the cooperation with the civil society sector is rather poorly developed in Croatia and this is reflected also in the influence of civil society organizations on the agenda setting that remains very limited. Only SELEC, SEEHN and MARRI sometimes include NGOs in the agenda setting processes, whereas the representatives of the two first underline that this is rather rare and in the case of SEEHN applies actually only to issues identification. In the case of MARRI the inclusion seem to be the most advanced, although refers only to the projects and activities which are based on cooperation with the civil society sector.

The eagerness of the state represents another crucial factor that shapes the level of local ownership in the initiatives of regional cooperation in South East Europe. The way the national and regional meetings are initiated is fairly consistent among the initiatives, with the exception of RAI, where meetings are hardly held. In all the other cases meetings are organized a minimum of twice a year, although the average is somewhere between two and three; five seem to be the maximum number of meetings organized when some special needs occur, for example, when Croatia held the presidency in the initiative.[31] Moreover, small, working and often informal meetings are held much more frequently, as previously mentioned, even a few times a week. The meetings are usually initiated by the coordinators or people responsible for particular, relevant and often burning questions. The regional-level meetings are organized usually once or twice each year and are initiated most frequently either by the regional bodies or by the member states, represented by country coordinators or ministers.

Decision making represents the last crucial aspect of local ownership as studied in the research. The way the decisions are made and who is responsible for the decision making is regulated strictly by the state law of Croatia and does not depend on the internal solutions implemented within the initiatives. However, a general trend may be identified that the majority of decisions concerning implementation of the initiative at national level are made by relevant ministers. Exceptionally, some less important decisions are made at the high managerial level of the relevant ministries. CPESSEC represents a somewhat special case in this field, since the body responsible for national coordination is not a ministerial body and therefore the deci-

sions are usually made by the Head of the Employment Centre in cooperation with the relevant ministry. The decisions are implemented at a lower level of the state administration they are made at and usually the responsibility for implementation is appointed to managers and senior managers, such as heads of department and heads of sector. At the same time, only respondents speaking about SEEHN, MARRI and CPESSEC consider implementation an important element of the successful operation of the initiatives. The interviewees related to RAI, SELEC and RP-SSCSSR had serious problems identifying any examples of implementation or claimed that there is nothing like clear implementation related to the activities of the initiative.

Gender Issues

Gender issues are the third and last dimension analysed in the study, based on two indicators: inclusion of women and gender mainstreaming. In all of the considered initiatives women constitute the majority of people involved in implementation at the national level. Moreover, in the case of the RP-SSCSSR and CPESSEC only women are (were) engaged in its implementation. The respondents explain this mainly by the fact that Croatian state administration is generally visibly dominated by women and in consequence the domination is reflected also where the initiatives of regional cooperation are concerned. This does not explain why the leadership, managerial and higher managerial positions are occupied by women as well, and only the position of minister is more frequently occupied by men. RAI is the only exception, where the leading position was recently occupied by a man.

The question of gender mainstreaming is relatively difficult to analyse since the inclusion of women is relatively well developed; however, the high number of women in

---

31   The best examples are MARRI and SEEHN, which hold approximately two meetings a year.

the structures of initiatives seems not to be planned. This might be confirmed by the fact that there are no considerations in any of the initiatives to include gender related issues in their work and policies, whereas the common answer to the question »why« is »because there is no need«. None of the initiatives have plans to involve more women in the work, which again is commonly considered as not needed.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The processes of building national-level capacities for regional cooperation in post-conflict and post-authoritarian political and societal systems have remained one of the great challenges for South East Europe in the past decade. Significant positive developments are undoubtedly noticeable both in Croatia and the other countries of the region; however, major obstacles still need to be overcome. The analysis, based on three crucial dimensions of functioning of the initiatives of regional cooperation in the fields of justice and home affairs and social development, allows the assessment, to some extent, of Croatia's capacities for regional cooperation and therefore contribute to the understanding of ongoing regional processes, as well as formulating recommendations for both state- and regional level decision makers involved in the work of the initiative.

The processes related to implementation of the regional agreement of cooperation have been relatively successful in Croatia; there is no urgent need for new laws to be passed and from the legal point of view all of the required implementations have been conducted. However, the practical level of implementation remains somewhat vague and the activities of the majority of initiatives are rather limited. Croatia still faces some difficulties related to human resources and technical infrastructure. Whereas the problems with the number of personnel refer, to a greater or lesser extent, to all of the initiatives, technical shortages are particularly visible in initiatives operating in specific and demanding fields, such as medical research. The practices and procedures of projects and policies are hardly structured and strongly based on an as-needed basis, which creates both positive results (such as open, flexible and inclusive organizational structure) and negative ones, such as blurred sharing of responsibility.

The level of local ownership is constantly developing positively, although the resources at the disposal of the Croatian party are fairly limited. The abovementioned flexibility of procedures slows the process down, however. Moreover, both the decision makers and staff involved in the work of the initiatives demonstrate a relatively low awareness of the importance of the state-level influences on regional cooperation and of local responsibility for the processes developed in the region. The poorly developed cooperation with civil society organizations makes the influence of Croatian society on agenda setting and policy implementation extremely limited and results in a weakening of the societal dimension of local ownership. One may conclude that this shows the average perception and »pragmatic approach« of political elites.

The gender issue represents a very interesting dimension of operation of the initiatives of regional cooperation in Croatia. Contrary to the two previously analysed dimensions, not much can be criticized on the level of practice here. However, some critical reflections should be made regarding the legal and conceptual level of women's inclusion and gender mainstreaming. The issues represent one of the fields omitted by decision makers in their considerations, which creates a serious risk of lack of continuity in the positive developments being experienced nowadays.

Another aspect that was not directly an object of analysis, but appeared to be an obvious weakness of the initiatives while the research was being conducted, is the poorly developed visibility of their activities and incompetently managed public relations, particularly at the national level. This results not only in serious problems in the field of communication about goals, projects and achievements of the initiatives, but also creates significant deficiencies of transparency with regard to their activities.

In order to address the abovementioned issues all the state-level processes should be mapped and precisely analysed by both decision makers and personnel involved in their conduct, which will allow them to determine real needs and areas of waste that can potentially be eliminated. To act on the defined demand, a long-term strategy of resource and infrastructure development should be outlined and regularly reviewed. The strategy should also include gender-related issues and be designed so that the gender balance is maintained. The open organizational culture should also be maintained, although a flexible structure does not mean a lack of structure and therefore in order to increase local ownership and the efficiency of the processes, the procedures should be defined and the crucial ones should be standardized. Moreover, the processes need to be more inclusive and the scope of social consultations must be extended. Finally, the bodies and institutions involved in the work of the initiatives should develop communication strategies and increase their digital visibility.

References

A Decade of Regional Cooperation on Public Health in South-Eastern Europe. A Story of Successful Partnership (2011), Third Health Ministers' Forum, Banja Luka.

Budway, V. M., and Busek, E. (2006), »From Dayton to Brussels: Ten Years of Moving from Stabilization to Integration«, in Busek, E. (ed.), *10 Years of Southeast European Cooperative Initiative. From Dayton to Brussels*. Vienna: Springer Verlag.

Centre of Public Employment Services of Southeast European Countries, www.cpessec.org.

Conclusion and Decisions of the 11th (SPAI) Steering Group Meeting, Podgorica, 9–10.9.2012; available at: http://www.rai-see.org/images/doc/32/Conclusions%20 and%20Decisions%20of% 2011th%20Steering%20Group%20meeting.pdf (last accessed: 08.10.2012).

Convention of the Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre, Bucharest, 9.12.2009; available at: http://www.selec.org/docs/PDF/SELEC%20Convention%20%5Bsigned%20on% 2009.12.2009%5D.pdf (last accessed: 8 October 2012).

Croatian Employment Service, www.hzz.hr.

Dubrovnik Pledge, Dubrovnik, 2.9.2001; available at: http://seehnsec.blogspot.com/p/ dubrovnik-pledge.html (last accessed: 8.10.2012).

IPA 2009 Croatia Project Fiche. HR2009-03-02-02: Strengthening the administrative capacity of competent authorities and implementation agencies for co-ordination of social security schemes; available at: http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/croatia/ipa/2009/09_co-ordination_of_social_security_schemes.pdf (last accessed: 10.10.2012).

Memorandum of Understanding concerning Cooperation in Fighting Corruption through the South Eastern European Anti-Corruption Initiative, Zagreb, 13.4.2007; available at: http://www.rai-see.org/images/doc/32/Memorandum%20of%20understanding.pdf (last accessed: 8.10.2012).

Memorandum of Understanding on the Establishment of the Regional Forum of the Migration, Asylum and Refugees Return Initiative, Tirana 2.7.2004; available at: http://www.marri-rc.org/upload/Documents/MARRI%20Main%20Documents/MoU%20on%20Establishment%20of%20MARRI%20Regional%20Forum%20-%202%20July%202004.pdf (last accessed: 8.10.2012).

Memorandum of Understanding on the Future of the South-Eastern Europe Health Network in the Framework of the South East European Co-operation Process, 22.4.2009; available at: http://seehnsec.blogspot.com/p/memorandum-of-understanding-2009.html (last accessed: 8.10.2012).

Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative, www.marri-rc.org.

Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Croatia, www.mfin.hr.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Croatia, www.mvep.hr.

Ministry of Health of the Republic of Croatia, www.zdravlje.hr.

Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia, www.mup.hr.

Partnership Protocol on the establishment of the Centre of Public Employment Services of Southeast European Countries, Sofia, 27.10.2006.

Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative, www.rai-see.org.

Southeast European Cooperative Initiative/Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre, www.secicenter.org.

South-Eastern Europe Health Network, seehnsec.blogspot.com.

Statement of Purpose for the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative, Geneva, 6.12.1996.

Zakon o potvrđivanju Konvencije Centra za provedbu zakona u Jugoistočnoj Europi, NN-MU 005/2011; available at: http://hidra.srce.hr/arhiva/263/71009/narodne-novine.nn.hr/ clanci/ medunarodni/2011_04_5_38.html (last accessed: 10.10.2012)

Interviewees

Official from the Ministry of Justice

Professor at the Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb

Two officials from the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs

Lecturer at the Police Academy

Croatian representative at the MARRI office

Official from the Croatian Employment Service

Official from the Ministry of Economy, Labour and Entrepreneurship

Two officials from the Ministry of Health

Monitoring Regional Cooperation in South East Europe:

Kosovo

Fatmir Curri and Mimika Loshi

1. Background information

Kosovo has been under the interim administration of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) since 1999. On 17 February 2008, Kosovo declared its independence from Serbia, while in December of same year, the European Union set up a police and rule-of-law mission (EULEX), who took over from UNMIK, to assist with preserving stability in Kosovo and supervise on matters of rule of law, customs and police.

Currently, 98[32] (out of 193) members of the UN have recognized Kosovo as an independent state; 22 out of 27 EU member states have recognized Kosovo.[33] The non-recognition, especially by the EU-5 – Slovakia, Romania, Cyprus, Greece and Spain – is one of the main reasons behind the EU's lack of contractual relations with Kosovo. Any progress within the enlargement process is subject to unanimity in the council of the EU, thereby creating an obstacle to Kosovo's advancement towards EU membership and increasing the gap between the Western Balkan neighbours. Kosovo has political and sectoral structured dialogue with the EU under the Stabilization and Association Process (SAP). Kosovo benefits from the Instrument of Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), like other potential candidate countries. Kosovo has the prospect of EU membership, but not yet a contractual agreement that would formally pave the way to a European future. The first step forward was marked last autumn with the Feasibility Study, which was proposed by the European Commission with the aim of assessing Kosovo's capabilities to start negotiations on a Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA).[34] The study called for the establishment of the first contractual relations between the EU and Kosovo, while on 10–11 December 2012 the EU Council 'took note' of the Commission's assessment but made no commitment towards starting the negotiations on the SAA until June, when further progress was made, both on the short-term requirements and the Belgrade-Prishtina dialogue. It is still unclear how the EU would sign an SAA with Kosovo once Kosovo meets the short-term priorities, bearing in mind the EU's five non-recognizing states.[35] This would be an important step since the Thessaloniki Summit when the European prospect was first promised to Kosovo. [36]

Relations with the United States and NATO remain very constructive and strong. The United States has always had the strongest influence on the political agenda in Kosovo, while

---

32   See: http://www.kosovothanksyou.com/

33   As of next year there will be 23 EU countries recognizing Kosovo since it is expected that Croatia will join the EU on 1 July 2013.

34   EC Communication to the EU Council and EP Feasibility Study for Kosovo 2012 of 10 October 2010.

35   The Feasibility Study requires of the Kosovo authorities that they deliver on short-term priorities (rule of law, public administration reform, protection of minorities, trade) before the EU can start negotiations for an SAA.

36   The European Council Summit was held in Thessaloniki on 1993 where the prospect of EU membership was promised to Kosovo within the framework of the European future for the whole region.

NATO is present on the ground through its KFOR mission (although decreasing in numbers), providing security in Kosovo since the end of the conflict in 1999.

The political interest in engaging in regional cooperation remains high for Kosovo, mainly due to its ambition as a new state to obtain recognition and become a partner in regional initiatives, thus overcoming its isolation. On the other hand, Kosovo needs to become part of regional free trade arrangements since economically it is not self-sufficient and is very dependent on imports. Kosovo has a significant trade deficit, which exceeded 2 billion euros in 2011 (45 per cent of GDP). The EU is by far Kosovo's most important trading partner, accounting for nearly half of its external trade. A significant proportion of Kosovo's total exports (61 per cent) are primary products, such as raw materials or goods with a low level of processing and relatively low added value, essentially base metals.[37] The economy has expanded on average by around 4 per cent over the past three years. Growth was expected to accelerate to 5 per cent in 2011, mainly driven by domestic demand, with strong increases in government consumption and investments. Exports of goods and services have also increased, but still cover only about one-third of total imports.[38] The country's economy is based on trade, services, remittances and government investments in infrastructure projects. Hence, its integration in and benefit from regional economic cooperation and trade agreements is of high priority and interest.

However, the elections in the past two years, which were a complex political exercise, shifted the focus to finding solutions concerning Kosovo's representation in the regional arena. The elections were another rea-

son the regional cooperation issue was not at the forefront of the government agenda for some time. The internal power-struggle, combined with the government's lack of a strategy to tackle the issue of representation, has impaired Kosovo's participation in regional cooperation initiatives and task forces operating under the RCC umbrella and the situation remains complex.

The main ethnic communities living in Kosovo are of Albanian (majority of population) and Serbian (biggest minority) origin. Depending on which ethnic population you talk to, their identification is with either their southern neighbour, Albania, or their northern neighbour, Serbia. Hence the Kosovar identity, as such, is more territorial/geographic than cultural, ethnic or linguistic. The majority of people in Kosovo are Albanian speakers, hence the language barrier has complicated its participation in regional forums. The other Western Balkan countries speak Slavic languages and hence can more easily understand each other.[39] This is one element that hinders regional cooperation and on several occasions has caused regional events to be held only between Kosovo, Albania and Macedonia in order to take advantage of using Albanian as a language of the meetings. Religious diversity and tolerance is one trait that characterizes ethnic Albanian culture, which in Kosovo can be of majority Muslim or Catholic background, a feature that promotes regional cooperation.

Kosovo's geographical position poses significant difficulties, mainly due to Serbia's and BiH's refusal to recognize Kosovo. Travel to those countries causes tremendous difficulties with regard to documents, licence plates, visas and car or health insurance. Another con-

---

37   EC Staff working document accompanying the Feasibility Study for Kosovo of 10 October 2012, p. 20.
38   Ibid, p. 15.

39   The language barrier is particularly evident for Kosovo public administration representatives (mid 40s–50s) who speak neither English nor Serbian, as underlined by the interviewees from RP-SSCSSR.

crete obstacle to good regional cooperation is the poorly developed infrastructure throughout the region, although this is improving.[40] In terms of the existing flight network in South East Europe the easiest place to meet for people coming from South East Europe is Vienna, Budapest, Ljubljana or Istanbul, all countries outside the region, but among the few destinations with direct flights. There is still no Balkan airline that is well connected throughout the region. In addition, there are visa requirements for Kosovo[41] passport holders to enter BiH, Croatia, Bulgaria and Romania. Only since 2012 has it been possible for Kosovo citizens to enter Serbia.

However, in the past few years the travel and visa process has become easier and participation by the Kosovo authorities in regional meetings has become more regular. The strong reluctance of Serbia, supported on several occasions by BiH and Romania, remains the major obstacle to Kosovo's participation in regional initiatives. All these factors add to the existing impediments preventing Kosovo from being connected to and benefiting from regional initiatives.

Concerning the international presence in Kosovo, a few of the main developments should be mentioned. The double-hatted office of the EU Special Representative (EUSR) and the International Civilian Representative has been decoupled. The office of the EU Special Representative and the European Commission Liaison Office have been merged into one EU Office. This has enhanced the EU's presence and visibility in Kosovo. The EUSR/

Head of EU office in Kosovo has also appointed an advisor on regional cooperation, which shows the importance the EU attaches to assisting Kosovo in joining regional structures.

To reflect the increasing capacities of the Kosovo authorities, the mandate of EULEX has been reconfigured and downsized. To assist the Kosovo authorities in facing the remaining challenges, its mandate has been extended until June 2014. Kosovo needs to maintain good cooperation with the mission and actively support the implementation of its mandate. The Commission is cooperating closely with EULEX throughout its reconfiguration to ensure a smooth transition and sustained support to the Kosovo authorities.[42]

2. Analysis of Regional Cooperation – Kosovo

The story of Kosovo in regional cooperation is very different from the neighbouring countries. Kosovo is still struggling to be represented on an equal footing with the rest of the countries in regional fora, or at least to have its representation not questioned or dismissed based on its non-recognition by a few regional countries.[43] In this part of the paper we examine the representation and participation of Kosovo in regional fora through an analysis of two features. The first concerns the participation of Kosovo in regional cooperation in general, including RCC and the six regional initiatives taken as a case study for the purpose of this research.[44] Putting particular emphasis on

---

40 Kosovo only recently (27 November 2012) inaugurated its first highway linking Prishtina with Tirana. The connection with its other neighbours (Skopje, Podgorica, and Belgrade) is via regular roads.

41 »Living in a Ghetto«, FORUM 2015, 2010. Kosovo passport holders can travel visa free to only four countries in the region: Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro and Turkey. As of 2012, based on dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia, travel to Serbia has also been facilitated with Kosovo passports or regular ID.

42 EC Staff Working document accompanying the Feasibility Study for Kosovo of 10 October 2012, p. 6, available at http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/countries/detailed-country-information/kosovo/index_en.htm

43 The strongest opposition is from Serbia, but also from BiH and Romania in some occasions – note from all interviewees.

44 Migration, Asylum, Refuges Regional Initiative (MARRI); Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative (RAI); Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre (SELEC); Southeast European Health Network (SEEHN); Regional Programme on Social Security Coordination and Social Security Reforms in Southeast Europe

the political milieu, this part tends to gravitate more towards political implications. The second part emphasizes Kosovo's institutional structure and analyses the capacities for implementing regional initiatives at the national level, as well as their performance. This part evaluates the different dimensions on the basis of three indicators: implementation (legislation, administrative structures, technical infrastructure); local ownership (resources, agenda setting, eagerness of the state, decision making); and gender (women's inclusion, gender mainstreaming).

Regional Representation

Kosovo aims to advance regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations, as well as to contribute to the Brussels and Washington agenda for achieving a stable, democratic region integrated in the EU and NATO. The strategic aim of Kosovo's foreign policy with regard to the region is to promote Kosovo as a contributor to security and stability.[45] Moreover, Kosovo aspires to be an actor ensuring peace and stability in the region with the aim of intensifying and enlarging diplomatic, economic and cultural relations with all its neighbours. Kosovo also aspires to become a member of regional organizations and contribute to good neighbourly relations and joint aspirations for EU membership. The representation and participation of Kosovo in regional initiatives is very important in preventing it from remaining isolated from the rest of the region.

Unfortunately, this willingness and positive attitude on the part of Kosovo has had little or no effect with regard to its representation, participation and regional cooperation. The non-recognition of final status settlement by Serbia and BiH remains the main reason for this. Russia and China as permanent members of the UN Security Council also did not accept the declaration of Kosovo's independence of 17 February 2008 as internationally a broadly accepted proposal.[46] As a consequence, Serbia has continually blocked or boycotted regional initiatives where Kosovo has been invited as a partner. The only exceptions were the regional initiatives where the signatory party on behalf of Kosovo was UNMIK, where Kosovo representatives would sit side by side or behind UNMIK representatives.

Since the takeover of the RCC from the Stability Pact for SEE in 2008, Kosovo has continued to be represented with the same formula »UNMIK/Kosovo«. The reconfiguration of UNMIK has been designed to facilitate this process, where necessary and possible, for Kosovo's continued engagement and the assumptions of international agreements. The shift in policy came with the Kosovo's declaration of independence in 2008, as a result of which Kosovo's external representation needed reconsideration. UNMIK is the signatory on behalf of Kosovo of a number of international agreements, as well as regional initiatives (Energy Community Treaty, European Common Aviation Area Agreement, South East Europe Transport Observatory, Central European Free Trade Agreement – CEFTA, Regional Cooperation Council). Although under the Kosovo constitution, the Kosovo authorities are supposed to ensure its regional and international representation they are not accepted as a successor to UNMIK by some parties to these agreements. This has caused serious challenges for Kosovo in its efforts to be represented in regional affairs.

Kosovar delegates have not been able to

(RP-SSCSSR); Centre for Public Employment Services of Southeast European Countries (CPESSEC).

45   Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Kosovo. See: http://www.mfa-ks.net/?page=1,11 »Foreign Policy Objectives of the Kosovo Republic«, p. 2.

46   Kosovo may get two-thirds of the necessary votes at the UN General Assembly to become a UN member, but China and Russia, both permanent members of UNSC, would block Kosovo's membership by exercising their veto.

participate in all events hosted by countries that do not recognise Kosovo, due to strong resistance from Serbia but also difficulties in using Kosovo passports. Such occurrences have become increasingly frequent and have been an obstacle to the development of effective regional cooperation. The EU has stressed that regional cooperation must be inclusive in order to be successful and regrets that disagreements regarding the manner of Kosovo's participation in regional fora have resulted in Kosovo's absence from key regional events.

Kosovo representatives have often not been able to participate in key political meetings of a regional character, such as the Summit of the South East European Cooperation Process (SEECP) held in Chisinau in June 2009, then in 2010 in Istanbul, in 2011 in Budva and in 2012 in Belgrade.

Moreover, Kosovo's participation in RCC board meetings became a challenge of its own, with the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities unable to make arrangements for Kosovo authorities to enter the country with Kosovar passports, although they were obliged to facilitate this under the RCC Host Country Agreement.[47] This situation continued until September 2009 when a special arrangement was found for Kosovar authorities to attend only RCC hosted meetings.

Although a streamlined procedure was eventually put in place for holders of Kosovo passports to obtain visas to attend RCC activities in BiH, the visa procedure remains cumbersome and time-consuming for other regional events held there. The latter circum-

stances have been the main reason for Kosovo's non-participation in the RCC Board meetings between June 2008 and September 2009, as well as other regional events hosted by RCC during this period.

With the evolving political developments on the ground and especially with the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) ruling on 22 July 2010 that Kosovo's declaration of independence was not in violation of international law, the Kosovo authorities were not content with their UNMIK/Kosovo *modus vivendi* for regional representation. This together with the internal changes of the RCC's national coordinator resulted in Kosovo's authorities not participating in RCC Board meetings in 2010. They did, however, participate as part of the UNMIK/Kosovo delegation at the RCC Annual Meeting in Montenegro in June 2011 and at the board meeting of September 2011. The new coordinator of the RCC office was eventually appointed in May 2011.

The Kosovo institutions attended most regional and international meetings for which UNMIK facilitation is required, thereby enabling Kosovo to be included in regional meetings. However, most of them still posed a problem for the representation of Kosovo under its constitutional name, hence making it difficult for practical cooperation, let alone benefiting from regional fora.

Against this background, since 2008 Kosovo has been assisted by the International Civilian Office (ICO) and the International Steering Group (ISG) in seeking representation in international and regional organizations. With the involvement and support of these two bodies, Kosovo has managed to become a member of only three international organizations: the IMF, the World Bank and the EBRD. Membership of and representation in other important international organizations, such as NATO, the EU, the UN, OSCE and CoE – important in strengthening Kosovo's international legiti-

---

47   On 14 September 2007 in Plovdiv, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the other SEECP participating states, as well as UNMIK on behalf of Kosovo signed the agreement establishing the secretariat of the RCC in Sarajevo. The Host Country Agreement (HCA) provides a sound legal basis for the RCC Secretariat to start its work as planned by the end of February 2008. The HCA also allows the Secretariat to conclude a Headquarters Agreement with Belgium to establish the RCC Liaison Office in Brussels.

macy – still lag behind.[48] The promise of more international representation and the inability of independence supporters to effectively deliver on such promises leaves the government in Prishtina without realistic prospects of soon acquiring membership in regional initiatives.

Following the UN General Assembly Resolution of September 2010 the EU has facilitated a dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade. The dialogue was launched in March 2011 to promote cooperation, achieve progress on the path to the EU and improve the lives of the people. The parties have reached agreement on free movement of persons, customs stamps, recognition of university diplomas, cadastre records, civil registries, Integrated Border Management (IBM) and regional cooperation. The agreement on regional cooperation of 24 February 2012 provides the modalities for Kosovo's participation and representation in regional cooperation arrangements.[49] This has been an important step in ensuring Kosovo's participation in regional initiatives. However, there were several occasions in 2012, especially at the beginning, when either Kosovo or Serbian delegates withdrew from meetings due to different interpretations of these arrangements.[50]

Kosovo's membership of and representation in regional initiatives has become a priority for Kosovo's government to demonstrate its commitment and achievements to the electorate. In parallel, Kosovo's representation in and membership of regional organizations has become a regular media topic. Regional cooperation is seen by the political elites as very important in convincing the electorate that Kosovo's statehood is recognized internationally.

In this light, eager to obtain legitimacy in regional organizations, Prishtina ended up accepting a controversial footnote to its name when being represented in regional organizations and meetings. The Republic of Kosovo agreed to be represented in regional organizations as Kosovo*. The asterisk reads: »this designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/99 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence«.

Left without other alternatives, international partners have pressed Prishtina and Belgrade into an agreement that potentially would normalize relations between the two. The EU has used a carrot and stick policy by promising candidate status for EU membership for Serbia and regional representation and visa liberalization for Kosovo. Serbia gained candidate status for EU membership, whereas Kosovo has neither achieved regional representation nor visa liberalization. The regional representation was the subject of interpretation of the agreement, while the visa roadmap was laid down in June 2012, requiring around 96 criteria divided into four blocks to be implemented by the Kosovo authorities, a process which is expected to take at least a few years.[51]

Belgrade and Prishtina were given different interpretations of the implementation of the asterisk agreement. Belgrade was told that in every regional organization Kosovo would be represented by both the asterisk and the footnote. Prishtina, on the other hand, was

---

48   For more on this, see »The unsupervised state«, KIPRED, Policy Brief No.1/12 August 2012, available at: www.kipred.net

49   See Annex 1, »Arrangements Regarding Regional Representation and Cooperation«. Since Kosovo and Serbia do not sign on the same page these EU facilitated arrangements are considered an agreement between two parties.

50   RCC board meeting in Sarajevo, 15 March 2012, from which the Serbian delegation withdrew its presence and the conference »Partnership for change, civil society and the governments in Western Balkans and Turkey«, 15 March 2012, organized by the Serbian government in Belgrade from which the Kosovo delegates withdrew.

51   Visa Liberalization with the Kosovo Roadmap. Full text of the documents can be found at: http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/kosovo/documents/eu_travel/visa_liberalisation_with_kosovo_roadmap.pdf

told that it would be represented only by the asterisk in the nameplates, while the footnote would be mentioned only in written documents. As a result, the regional organizations received the Brussels »conclusions« without guidance on how to implement it, thus leaving it subject to interpretation by all parties. Since Serbia has never agreed to sign any document, including this agreement, on the same page as Kosovo – which would ultimately mean recognition – there is no formal agreement on what was agreed besides the famous Brussels »conclusions« that later turned out to also have different versions, as posted on the two governments' websites. Kosovo – with or without the asterisk and the footnote – is thus still unable to achieve full representation in the majority of regional organizations.

Regional Participation in Six Selected Initiatives

The agreement on regional cooperation of February 2012 should allow Kosovo to increase and extend its direct participation in regional mechanisms. This includes the Transport Community Treaty, judicial cooperation and arrangements for employment and social policies within the framework of the SEE, the Employment and Social Policy Network and the SEE Health Network. It should also ensure Kosovo's full participation in the Roma Decade.[52] The process of dialogue between Belgrade and Prishtina on regional representation and other key topics is still in progress. The implementation in good faith of those agreements will determine Kosovo's future in the regional fora where Serbia still has the upper hand when it comes to Kosovo's participation and representation.

The same challenges for Kosovo exist also with the six regional initiatives considered

in this study. Initiatives such as MARRI, RAI and SELEC are of high priority for the Kosovan government.[53] With regard to MARRI and RAI,[54] the Kosovo government sent official letters requesting membership of these regional organizations, to which it has never officially received a reply with approval or disapproval.[55] Although the EU Office in Kosovo attempted to facilitate the negotiations with MARRI this remains a challenging task since Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina are members and they have to agree to broaden the membership of the organization.[56] The same holds true with regard to membership of RAI. To date, Kosovo has obtained only observer status in the RAI Steering Group.

Kosovo under UNMIK has been an observer in the former SECI Centre, now SELEC, with its headquarters in Bucharest. SELEC has undergone two developments since then. First, SELEC has sent a letter to UNMIK asking them to clarify what kind of relationship they intend to have in future with SELEC, to which there has been no reply. Secondly, the Kosovo authorities through MFA have sent an email requesting information on membership and afterwards an official letter was sent to the SEEPAG chair requesting membership, to which again no reply was received.

With regard to all of the abovementioned correspondence, as well as from other regional initiatives the research found that the Kosovo authorities did not meet the procedural requests of either organization. Each regional initiative has its own bodies and procedures within the framework of which new mem-

---

52   EC Staff working document accompanying the Feasibility Study for Kosovo of 10th Oct, 2010, Page' 19.

53   Statement by Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr Petrit Selimi at the Regional Workshop organized by EUSR and KCSF in Prishtina on 7 December 2012.

54   Serbia actively lobbies against Kosovo's membership of these initiatives. Immediately after the Kosovo letter requesting membership of RAI, the Serbian MFA sent a several pages of legal justification why RAI should not do agree.

55   The Kosovo government through MFA sent a letter requesting membership to the RAI Secretariat on 2 April 2012.

56   See: http://www.marri-rc.org/Default.aspx?mld=1&Lan=EN

bers should address their request in an official fashion. Although the reasons for Kosovo authorities not receiving replies on admission are not purely procedural, a thorough analysis of requirements from each regional initiative should be conducted by the Kosovo administration before official communication is initiated. Failure to do so shows a lack of knowledge and professionalism.

On the other hand, the Kosovo Police and the Ministry of Internal Affairs are very much active in ILECU (International Law Enforcement Cooperation Unit).[57] The government of Kosovo has approved the decision to establish the latter, which will function as part of the Kosovo Police. The following will be incorporated within these units: the Offices of INTERPOL, EUROPOL, EUROJUST and FRONTEX. This unit has the primary objective of coordinating the activities of law enforcement agencies as part of the fight against organized crime and terrorism. Additionally, with the objective of coordinating international cooperation within this unit, a cooperation agreement was signed between the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Finance and the State Prosecution Service. For this purpose the relevant department within the Kosovo Police has dedicated considerable space, equipment and staff.[58]

Unfortunately, out of three targeted regional initiatives related to social develop-

ment Kosovo is not a member of either the SEE Health Network or the Centre for Public Employment Services of SEE. Thus very little can be reported on these two. According to officials from the Ministry of Health, they sent an official request to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kosovo to ask for official membership of SEEHN so that health officials could take part in those meetings, but they never received an answer from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. On the other side, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials said they were unclear concerning membership procedures and how to contact the SEEHN Secretariat, hence no further progress was made in this front.[59]

Out of six regional initiatives taken as a case study for the purposes of this research Kosovo has participated in only one, the Regional Programme on Social Security Coordination and Social Security Reforms in South East Europe (RP-SSCSSR). Kosovo could participate in this initiative because it was an EU initiated regional affair, in other words, funded by the EU and a Council of Europe project. The purpose of the RP-SSCSSR Joint Programme between the European Commission and the Council of Europe was to continue assisting the beneficiary parties in South-East Europe (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, Macedonia and Turkey, as well as Kosovo) in further enhancing the regional coordination of social security systems and facilitating institutional, legislative and administrative reforms in the field of social protection in accordance with Council of Europe and EU best practice.

The RP-SSCSSR was in existence from March 2008 until November 2010. This Programme was an integral continuation of the Social Institutions Support Joint Programme

---

57   ILECU is a project financed by EC IPA MIPD 2011–2013 on the fight against organized crime: International Cooperation in Criminal Justice. The project is designed in accordance with the recognized challenges of the JHA system, and as such it will contribute to strengthening international law enforcement cooperation in the fight against organized crime and corruption and better understanding of EU best practice in justice and law enforcement. In fact, in the regional context, the objectives are to strengthen regional and international cross-border cooperation mechanisms between law enforcement agencies and judicial authorities in combating various forms of organized crime and corruption, through networking, mutual legal assistance, transfer of proceedings, requests for extradition, joint investigation teams and witness protection programmes.

58   A fully IT equipped, high security office with seven employees has been allocated to perform ILECU duties.

---

59   From the discussions we had with Mos. Mentor Sadiku, Acting Director of DEIPC in the Ministry of Health, and Mr Melhin Mahmuti, an official from the Directorate for Regional Cooperation in the MFA.

of the European Commission and the Council of Europe under the CARDS Regional Action Programme (2004–2007).[60] Kosovo's participation in and benefit from this regional programme was limited.[61] Participation in regional programmes is regarded as additional work, in which a major impediment is the language barrier. Although participation in the events and activities of this regional programme was satisfactory, the knowledge level and the ability to transpose the regional best practice into national legislation and practice is almost impossible or very slow. This is mainly due to lack of capacities, inter-ministerial coordination and appropriate budgetary allocation to transpose regional commitments into local policies. The only experience-sharing project and exchange of practices in social areas is implemented with Albania. On some occasions, irrelevant Kosovo officials have been sent to regional meetings to balance the participation among Ministries, to respect the hierarchy and even based on ability to speak foreign languages. It is difficult to follow-up regional programmes in particular when one needs to have proper national capacities to coordinate or reform social policies or sign bilateral agreements. Coordination within national priorities has also been difficult, in particular with the Ministry of Health, which plays a major role in social reforms.

Regarding Kosovo's place in regional initiatives it is clear that those regional initiatives that are mainly run at the regional level – that is, MARRI, RAI, SELEC, SEEHN but also RCC – are the most problematic for Kosovo's participation. The regional cooperation initiatives led by the EU or some other international organization tend to have easier participation requirements for Kosovo and hence ensure all-inclusiveness, especially on the technical and operational level.

Institutional Challenges

Kosovo's government is not only a victim of external factors that impede Kosovo benefitting from regional initiatives. There is also an essential lack of understanding in the Kosovo government and administration, as well as a lack of comprehensive strategy and coordination for external representation and for joining regional bodies and organizations. The arrangements for Kosovo's participation in regional events have tended to be ad hoc, usually made at the last minute without proper coordination. Kosovo's approach to UNMIK's role has not been consistent either. This has led again to ad hoc arrangements on a number of occasions.

The cumbersome initiatives from two contested structures on regional and foreign affairs (the Office of Prime Minister with a national coordinator on Regional Initiatives and the recently established Ministry of Foreign Affairs) have led to the lack of coordination and mismanagement that characterize Kosovo's representation in regional fora. The administrative instructions of Kosovo delegates for participation in regional meetings are clear and concise, but inefficient in practice.[62] Due to the different approaches of different regional initiatives depending on their host country or organization there are divergent interpretations and specific circumstances that require last-minute instructions. At operational level the line ministries and independent government agencies are continuously faced by difficulties in participation due to lack of human resources capable of attending and linking regional obligations with national policies.

---

60   See: http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/sscssr/Edito/001Feb06-1_en.asp

61   Input from interviewees from MLSW participating in activities and board meetings of RP-SSCSSR.

---

62   Administrative Instruction on participation in regional meeting issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 22 April 2012.

Role of the Office of Prime Minister

The Office of Prime Minister since the start of the Stability Pact has established an office for the coordination of Stability Pact activities comprised of three employees: a coordinator politically appointed by the Prime Minister and two civil servants.

This continues except with regard to the transformation of the Stability Pact to into the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), where the coordinator of RCC was the political advisor of the Deputy Prime Minister and had only one civil servant dealing with regional cooperation.[63] At this point in time the first RCC national Coordinator and Advisor to the Deputy Prime Minister endeavoured to establish contact points in each Ministry where they could coordinate the invitations from the RCC (through UNMIK) to the Kosovo authorities, so that relevant line ministries would be informed and ready to participate. These contact points in line ministries were usually placed within European integration departments, utilizing the same individuals responsible for EU affairs.

The reason why the national coordinator for regional initiatives and the RCC is a political figure directly responsible to the Prime Minister was initially because the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is relatively newly established and does not have an institutional memory of Stability Pact and RCC activities before 2008. Unlike other countries in the region, Kosovo's situation is specific and due to a number of sensitive issues the direct approach by the Prime Minister is considered necessary for the time being. However, such a structure patronizes the regional participation and representation and diminishes the role of line ministries, creating an unpleasant atmosphere internally

with regard to obligations and follow-up from regional commitments.

Role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

With the establishment of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, those dealing with regional cooperation could easily discern the contention between the Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on regional affairs issues. In 2008 it was even more marked than today because the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs represented conflicting political parties (PDK vs. LDK), while today they both come from same party (PDK). Substantial disagreements were acute back then and reflected in participation in regional events. The differences in opinion still persist between these two institutions and civil servants belonging to opposite parties, although the general idea is that after 2014 the department on regional cooperation will be entirely within the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Line Ministries and Agencies

These represent either direct beneficiaries or institutions bound by obligations or commitments made at regional level. Unfortunately, there is a general lack of understanding in line ministries and independent government agencies concerning how to follow up and benefit from regional initiatives. In several cases major mechanisms and structures need to be in place in order to follow up on regional meetings. It would not be too presumptuous to say that officials with the relevant travel documents, speaking languages and having no family obstacles participate in regional and international meetings. In most cases an official that speaks English participates regardless of relevance, or in other cases attendance is done in rotation so that everyone has a chance to go. Consequently, there is no proper follow up or coordination after meetings abroad.

---

63 Government Decision 228/08 of 19.11.2008 transformed the Stability Pact Office into the Office for RCC. Responsible for implementing this decision is the national coordinator of the Office for the Regional Cooperation Council.

These trips are mostly considered as study excursions/meetings from which participants share experiences. Once they are back there is no follow-up that would ensure government bodies would benefit and keep track of developments in the region and apply them at home. Although the situation has slightly improved in the past few years a major change in attitude is required on this front. An interviewed official in charge of regional cooperation linked the weak coordination of government bodies with Kosovo's non-membership in regional initiatives: there is no incentive to strengthen structures at home if proper regional participation and ultimately regional cooperation is not ensured.[64] Once Kosovo is an equal participant and hence directly benefits from regional initiatives this will immediately require a strengthening of institutional structures for coordination inside the government.

2.1 Implementation

As described in the previous parts, out of six regional initiatives monitored in this study Kosovo participated only in the activities of the RP-SSCSSR. Although analysing the implementation indicators is limited to this regional initiative the assessments and outcomes from this part also relate to meetings, activities, regional forums and the participation or representation of Kosovo in similar initiatives in the area of rule of law and social development issues in general. Implementation in the sectors of rule of law and social development has been monitored according to four indicators: legislation, administrative structures, technical infrastructure and practices and procedures.

2.1.1 Legislation

Kosovo has implemented an intensive legislative agenda since 2000. On average, 100 to 150 pieces of primary and secondary legislation have had to be drafted and adopted each year. The majority of regional initiatives did not directly require new legislation to be passed in Kosovo. Since most of the legislation was prepared by international and European consultants the enacted legislation always considered obligations under international agreements and, where relevant, the commitments or obligations deriving from regional agreements such as CEFTA,[65] SEETO, ECT and ECAA.

Due to Kosovo's participation in the Stabilization and Association Process Dialogue, the framework for EU integration of the Western Balkans, in general the legislation meets the regionally set criteria and standards. Usually, legislation is sponsored by ministries and the Office of the Prime Minister plays a major role. During the research it was found that it is impossible to propose new legislation or reforms based on some good practice or coordination with the regional partners mainly due to the intensive legislative agenda, ad hoc planning, budgetary limitations and capacities to link national priorities with regional programmes/initiatives. The enacted legislation is sufficiently detailed, however, by-laws and sometimes concrete action plans and strategies are missing or their implementation lags behind.

For example, there is a strategy for anticorruption, but its transposition into by-laws and administrative regulations is missing, along with proper budgetary allocations. Another example is the law on re-admission

---

64 Interviewees stressed this with regard to the political aspect, too.

---

65 With regard to CEFTA there is great disappointment on the part of the Kosovo government which blames the EU for not keeping Serbia accountable. »The EU delivered too slowly at the expense of Kosovo«, stated Mr Edon Cana (National Coordinator for Regional Cooperation) at the Regional Workshop organized in Prishtina on 7 December 2012.

whose implementation has been very difficult due to lack of knowledge of the necessary secondary legislation and mechanisms to be put in place for its implementation.

2.1.2 Administrative Structures

Kosovo participated only in RP-SSCSSR and as an observer under UNMIK in SELEC and RAI events. After the declaration of independence the participation of UNMIK was complicated, as described in the previous section and thus the findings from this indicator have certain limitations. They illustrate that the participation in aforementioned initiatives has not had a significant impact on administrative structures in Kosovo. There has been no creation of new units or bodies and for all of them functional redistribution of the same staff was utilized. These have been primarily various administrative units in line ministries or independent agencies dealing with the issues and fields covered by the activities of the specific initiative.[66]

In practice, there are two concrete cases which can be reported when it comes to the question of certain advancements in administrative structures. The first, working on the rule of law, is related to ILECU and located at the Kosovo Police HQ; it was created as a new unit to meet obligations under that umbrella. The second case relates to the RP-SSCSSR programme, which has already closed. In the latter programme two employees of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare participated and since the closure of the project they have had no links with the regional programme or the partners from the region. For this purpose, the existing staff has been deployed to implement activities within this regional programme. It is important to note that no specific training was offered to them, except

for that offered within the EU funded project. Last but not least, Kosovo does not have any seconded staff in regional bodies. The lack of such seconded staff in regional bodies dealing with regional initiatives is explained by the interviewees in two different ways: they either underline that Kosovo is a new and small administration so there is no possibility for seconded staff or it is a result of Kosovo's lack of formal representation in these bodies.[67]

2.1.3 Technical Infrastructure

Not many changes have been introduced in the field of technical infrastructure either. For the purposes of the initiatives, no new facilities were purchased, rent or built. In the case of ILECU some renovation of the building and adaptation was needed. For the majority of the initiatives also the technical capacities have not been increased compared to the capacities of the responsible bodies before establishment of the frameworks for cooperation. Eventual purchases have been rather of a common nature and related to software updates or replacement of old equipment. Again, ILECU represents an exception. Due to the specific area of activity, mainly police cooperation, the provision of secure channels of communication was necessary for effective functioning of the initiative and all the necessary devices were purchased, equipment installed and staff trained.[68]

2.1.4 Practices and Procedures

The practice and procedures for participation in regional initiatives are not standard and differ from initiative to initiative. One should not underestimate the role of the host country either, since various interpretations and attitudes towards Kosovo depend on the host country or organization, in several cases even

---

66 Cases were found in the Anti-Corruption Agency, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the Ministry of Health.

67 As underlined by the interviewees on more than two occasions.

68 Ibid., p. 24.

individuals play a role. The preparatory meetings at national level to prepare a regional position are missing or are organized on an ad hoc basis or consulted in small circles of political advisers. The national level meetings are usually initiated by relevant ministries at the level of directorates or sometimes even at ministerial level. In general, the meetings are organized at ministerial level, where political advisers play a crucial role. No fixed structures are in place. All of the respondents underline that when consultation is needed with national coordinators or representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs it is difficult to reach and due to the number of different addressees inconsistent instructions are sent.[69] Added to this, their input and contribution is not always appropriate or relevant. Moreover, the meetings are attended by external experts and numerous consultants working in Kosovo, both on EU and other missions. However, even if their inputs are necessary local experts regard their presence as likely to disclose the national position too early in the process and have reservations when foreign experts are involved.

Civil society organizations are not included in government work on regional affairs. Some government bodies conduct consultations; however, the processes are ad hoc rather than formalized and structured. Only the Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) works with CSOs and includes them in its activities, but still the ACA expects the CSOs to become partners in fighting corruption and not only serve as a critical mass. This approach should be rethought since CSOs enjoy the freedom to be partners and become »whistle blowers«

when necessary. The rest of the government includes CSOs in its activities in a limited way, such as joint events[70] (conferences, round tables) or programme implementation (mainly in the field of social policies). CSOs are not included or consulted during the decision-making process in any initiative. The majority of respondents do not recognize a need to include civil society in regional cooperation initiatives as they consider this purely government business.

2.2 Local Ownership

2.2.1 Resources
The majority of respondents declared that there is sufficient budget allocation for the implementation of regional initiatives. But when asked about precise amounts allocated for particular initiatives government officials cannot really answer. This is mainly because Kosovo regularly has a budgetary shortfall at the end of the year, and on some occasions even the membership fee for RCC[71] has been taken from budgetary reserves through a government decree. The research shows that budget has never been an impediment for Kosovo's participation in regional initiatives.[72] On the other hand, there is a lack of planning culture and allocation of budgetary lines for commitments or even participation at regional meetings since these are covered from goods and services budget lines within ministries.[73] None of the officials were able to answer how much of GDP is allocated for regional participation and representation.

---

69 For example the Administrative Instruction (22.04.2012) giving guidelines for implementing the representation of Kosovo in regional initiatives appointed four responsible officials, two of whom belong to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and two to the Office of the Prime Minister. On top of this, consultation is also done through the national coordinator for regional cooperation and the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs.

70 For example Germia Hill Conference organized by MFA jointly with ECFR is such a case. However, NGOs here are mainly the ones present from the region, whereas local NGOs have not been invited in sufficient numbers.

71 Kosovo contributes 40,000 euros a year to the RCC.

72 An interviewee responded that Kosovo has around 500,000 euros available each year for regional cooperation.

73 In the case of the Agency for Anti-Corruption about 2.5 per cent of its annual budget is invested in regional training.

The solutions regarding financial resources in the analysed regional cooperation initiatives vary significantly. As some budgets do not include any resources from the national level and local ownership does not exist in this dimension at all, as in the case of the RP-SSCSSR, the other initiatives include national contributions in their budgets; however, the amounts and ways of contributing are not consistent. For example, RAI has a fixed contribution of 20,000 euros, whereas other initiatives have quotas and formulas based on GDP. However, for Kosovo a challenge remains at the political level but when it comes to payment the respondents say that Kosovo is always ready to pay contributions.

2.2.2 Agenda Setting
Another important indicator representing the level of local ownership is who sets the issues that are discussed in national meetings and/or regional meetings. With regard to monitored areas the national meetings are barely organized. They tend to concern internal matters and have a clearly task-oriented character; the agenda is obviously related to the purpose for which the meeting was called. Whether a linkage is made with regional commitments depends a lot on the proactive participation of local experts in regional initiatives who introduce it into national discussions. In the majority of regional initiatives the agenda setting is conducted at the managerial level in relevant ministries. The preparatory discussions for regional meetings are usually conducted by nominating the participants and instructing them on how to react in the case of counter-moves from Serbia. As far as Kosovo is concerned, the respondents believe that final responsibility is usually in the hands of the regional bodies setting the agenda. As previously mentioned, the cooperation with civil society is fairly poor in Kosovo and this is also reflected in the influence of civil society organizations on agenda setting, which remains very limited.

2.2.3 Eagerness of the State
The eagerness of the state represents another crucial factor that shapes the level of local ownership of regional initiatives. The example of the RP-SSCSSR shows that predominantly the rhythm and frequency of meetings are set by regional programme headquarters/ secretariat. The research concludes that Kosovo does not show much eagerness to either host or initiate meetings of a regional nature. Somehow, the respondents are self-satisfied and excuse themselves by stating that Kosovo is a young country and thus initiatives are not expected. In general, the way the national and regional meetings are conducted varies in accordance with the frequency set by regional initiatives themselves. In sum, regional-level meetings are organized usually once or twice a year and are initiated either by the regional bodies or in rare cases by the member states.

2.2.5 Decision Making
Decision making represents a final indicator of local ownership. Kosovo lacks structures and mechanisms for decision making. Due to the sensitivity of the issue the national coordinator for regional cooperation reports to the Prime Minister, thus making him an ultimate authority when it comes to decisions. However, a general trend may be identified that the majority of decisions concerning the implementation of the initiative at national level are made by relevant ministers, heads of independent agencies and high ranking officials. Some less important decisions are made at the high managerial level of relevant ministries. RP-SSCSSR was a special case, since the body responsible for national coordination was at the Department of Social Affairs at the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and thus the decisions were usually made by the head of this Department.

The operational decisions are made at a lower level of the state administration; usually the responsibility for implementation is appointed to managers and senior managers – heads of department and heads of sector. It is important to note that interviewees had serious problems identifying any examples where decisions needed to be taken, thus limiting the importance of the indicator with regard to the share of local ownership.

2.3 Gender Issues

2.3.1 Inclusion of Women

Gender issues represent the last indicator analysed during the research. Two indicators are considered, inclusion of women and gender mainstreaming. In most regional initiatives and meetings men constitute the majority. However, the involvement, implementation and operations side at the national level is in the hands of women. For example, in the case of the RP-SSCSSR two men are involved in its implementation, whereas the relevant department comprises 60 per cent women and 40 per cent men. In addition, the office for co-ordination with RCC is led by a man (national coordinator) and supported by two women. The respondents explain it mainly by the fact that Kosovo state administration is generally dominated by women when it comes to administrative and support staff,[74] whereas managerial positions belong to men.[75] It should also be noted that due to family obligations and general mind-set men travel much more often than women.[76]

However, this does not mean that there are no women in ministerial and higher managerial positions: for example, the President of Kosovo is a woman, there are women ministers and indeed a chief negotiator for Kosovo's participation in regional meetings was a woman, Deputy Prime Minister Edita Tahiri. All in all, however, one can conclude that men play the major role when it comes to regional cooperation.

2.3.2 Gender Mainstreaming

The question of gender mainstreaming needs much more attention in Kosovo when it comes to international and regional affairs. Alongside good governance, transparency and accountability the government of Kosovo has included gender mainstreaming as a horizontal priority within its public administration reform plan. However, the low number of women in the decision-making structures of regional initiatives seems not to be an effect of the strategic approach but rather incidental. On the other hand, women tend to be less proactive or ready to travel and assume obligations of regional nature in comparison to men. This might be explained by the culture and mind-set of Kosovars: one high official recalls asking a women employee to attend a regional meeting but she agreed to do so only if accompanied by another female colleague.[77]

3. Conclusions and Recommendations

Clearly, the Kosovo story in regional cooperation is very different from that of neighbouring countries. Kosovo continues to struggle for equal representation in regional meetings, or at least to have its representation not questioned or rejected based on its non-rec-

---

74 The office for regional cooperation at the Office of the Prime Minister employs three women and a man, who holds the position of National Coordinator for Regional Cooperation.
75 For example, the Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) has 34 employees, with men occupying management positions; 13 employees – about 33 per cent – are women, occupying mainly administrative positions. ACA's regional cooperation office has four employees, two of whom are women.
76 Due to the nature of the work, for example at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, all regional tasks are dealt with by men.

---

77 Interview with the Head of ACA.

ognition by regional countries, mainly Serbia and BiH, but also Romania and Moldova. The challenges with regard to membership of regional organizations are threefold: the first is certainly the blockade by Serbia, which leads to the second, the lack of feedback from regional bodies; the third is legal justification.[78] The Arrangements Regarding Regional Representation and Cooperation agreed with Serbia should allow Kosovo to increase and extend its direct participation in regional mechanisms. This includes full participation in all regional initiatives and gradually moving towards membership to RCC and its political umbrella SEECP. The dialogue between Belgrade and Prishtina on regional representation and other key topics is still in progress and very much linked to both countries' European prospects. The implementation in good faith of those agreements will determine Kosovo's future in the regional fora where Serbia still has the upper hand when it comes to Kosovo's participation and representation.

Although there is political will the government of Kosovo lacks essential understanding of the importance of regional cooperation and lacks a comprehensive strategy and coordination for external representation and for joining regional bodies and organizations. A much stronger focus, inter-ministerial coordination, resources and administrative and physical infrastructure are needed to both secure participation but also perform the obligations deriving from regional initiatives. Ultimately, regional cooperation should be done for the benefit of the citizens. While undergoing intensive legislative and administrative reforms, adequate and proper human resources should be allocated for Kosovo to participate, improve its performance and import knowledge and projects of a regional dimension. Since Kosovo has a priority list of regional or-

ganizations[79] it wants to join, it should develop a strategic plan and devote financial and administrative structures to support this plan. In the meantime, a clear and definite list of regional organizations and initiatives should be designed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and made available to the public.[80] The Kosovo authorities should be realistic about their budgetary constraints and aspire for membership only of those regional initiatives where there is a clear strategic interest and benefit for Kosovo's citizens.

Recommendations for the Kosovo Authorities

- The regional cooperation momentum built up recently for Kosovo should be effectively used by the government for participation and membership and ultimately to benefit from regional initiatives.
- The regional initiatives that are most beneficial for the development of Kosovo and the benefit of its citizens should be chosen strategically and cautiously. All necessary planning should be carried out for participation, representation and membership in regional initiatives, as well as for becoming active in structures and various bodies of regional initiatives.
- Visibility and awareness of regional success stories with regard to regional cooperation initiatives should be increased, thus raising the direct interest of the citizens with regard to the benefits of regional cooperation.

---

78   Ibid., p. 22.

79   The list of priority regional organizations is created and exists at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

80   Currently, there are several varying lists in internal Ministry of Foreign Affairs use: some officials refer to them as Robert Cooper's list (Robert Cooper is the former facilitator of the Prishtina-Belgrade dialogue from Baroness Ashton's team). This list contains mistakes and includes several organizations or initiatives which are not even regional or belong to civil society, such as the Balkan Civil Society Development Network.

- The human resources responsible at central level for regional cooperation should be restructured. There should be an immediate shift of responsibilities from the Office of the Prime Minister to the relevant Ministry of Foreign Affairs department, thus linking the responsible political coordinator with implementation and follow-up structures. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs should also increase professional capacities in this department, not only in terms of the number of employees.

- The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs should be made responsible for all issues related to regional cooperation. Currently, the Deputy Minister is responsible only for implementation of the so-called arrangements agreement between Kosovo and Serbia.

- A proactive stance should be taken and initiatives launched to host regional meetings and make efforts to send seconded staff, as well as to host secretariats of new or existing regional initiatives on issues relevant to Kosovo's development.

- The necessary funds and human resources should be allocated to perform and deliver during the rotating chairmanships of regional initiatives. Chairmanship of CEFTA during 2011 was among the few in which Kosovo was able to show its capacities.

- An inter-ministerial system for knowledge and information sharing should be established with regard to participation, commitments and benefits from attending meetings of a regional character.

- Gender mainstreaming should be improved in the work and policies presently governing regional and international affairs, including in decision-making processes and representation.

- Capacities should be increased with regard to presentation, public speaking, negotiating and communication skills of line ministry personnel, including language skills. Assistance and professional support should also be sought, including from TAIEX and twinning projects, to assist Kosovo in these endeavours.

- Strong interpersonal links and networks should be built since personal links play a major role in regional matters.

- Civil society organizations should be included in the work of the government with regard to regional affairs, especially on planning, consultation and, where expertise exists, implementation.

- Awareness and understanding should be increased of the importance of regional cooperation, its benefits, obligations and commitments made at regional fora by ministers, permanent secretaries and senior officials.

86   FRIEDRICH
EBERT
STIFTUNG   **Monitoring Regional Cooperation in South East Europe**

References

Anastasakis, O. and Bojicic-Dzelilovic, V. (2002), »Balkan regional cooperation and European integration«, The Hellenic Observatory and the London School of Economics and Political Science.

Bastian, J. (2011), »Cross-border cooperation in the Western Balkans – roadblocks and prospects«, *TransConflict*, March.

Bechev, D. (2006), »Carrots, sticks and norms: the EU and regional cooperation in Southeast Europe«, *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans,* 8 (1): 27–43.

Centre of Public Employment Services of Southeast European Countries (CPESSEC), http:// www.cpessec.org/

Delevic, M. (2007), »Regional cooperation in the Western Balkans«, Chaillot Paper No. 104, Institute for Security Studies, July.

EC Commission Staff Working document accompanying the Feasibility Study for Kosovo of 10 October 2010.

EC Communication to the EU Council and European Parliament, Feasibility Study for Kosovo 2012 of 10 October 2010.

EC Progress Report 2011, October.

FORUM 2015, co-author Fatmir Curri (2010), »Living in a Ghetto«.

KIPRED (2012), »The unsupervised state«, Policy Brief No. 1/12, August.

Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative (RAI), http://www.rai-see.org/

Report on the activities of the Regional Cooperation Council secretariat for the period 4 May–5 October 2012, by the Secretary General of the RCC.

RP-SSCSSR, http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/sscssr/default_en.asp

Southeast European Cooperation Process (2011), Regional Strategic Document and Action Plan on Justice and Home Affairs, 2011–2013.

Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre (SELEC) (formerly known as SECI), http://www. secicenter.org/m105/Home

South-Eastern Europe Health Network (SEEHN), http://seehnsec.blogspot.com/p/about-see-health-network.htmlMigration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative (MARRI), http://www. marri-rc.org/Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kosovo (n.d.), Foreign Policy Objectives, www. mfa-ks.net

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kosovo (2012), Administrative Instruction on participation at regional meetings, 22 April 2012.

Interviewed Officials (in alphabetical order)

Arta Hasimja Efendija, Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) Senior Officer

Artan Duraku, Acting Director of the Directorate for Re-integration, MIA

Damijan Sedar, Political Adviser for Regional Cooperation, EUSR/EU Office in Kosovo

Edon Cana, National Coordinator for Regional Initiatives and Adviser on EU affairs to PM

Hasan Preten, Head of Agency for Anti-Corruption

Lirak Çelaj, National Coordinator for Regional Cooperation (Sept 2008 – February 2011)

Lulzim Beqiri, Head of European Integration Office, Ministry of Justice

Mentor Morina, Head of Division for Budget Analyses and Poverty Evaluation, MLSW

Muhamet Gjocaj, Director of Department for Social Welfare, MLSW

Petrit Selimi, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs

Veton Elshani, Director of Unit for International Cooperation and Law Enforcement

Annex 1: Text of Kosovo's regional representation agreement

Arrangements Regarding Regional Representation and Cooperation

1. Both parties confirm their commitment to effective, inclusive and representative regional cooperation.
2. To this effect »Kosovo*« is the only denomination to be used within the framework of regional cooperation.
3. The footnote to be applied to the asterisk in para 2 above will read »This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.«
4. »Kosovo*« participates on its own account and speaks for itself at all regional meetings.
5. Where new agreements are to be initialled and/or signed, a representative of »Kosovo*« will sign under the designation in paras 2 and 3 above.
6. As concerns modifications to existing agreements signed by UNMIK, nothing in these conclusions will be interpreted as prejudicial to UNMIK's legal rights. A representative of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) will be invited to meetings organised within the framework of arrangements for which it is a signatory. It is for UNMIK to decide whether to attend any particular meeting.
7. Hosts of meetings will be encouraged to avoid the display of national symbols except for their own and those of the EU, taking into account the statutes of relevant organisations.
8. The EU as Facilitator will inform relevant regional organisations and entities of these arrangements for denomination, representation and signature. They should be reflected in the practical organisation of regional meetings. The EU will monitor the implementation of these arrangements.
9. Both parties and the EU will urge partners to support these arrangements and to assist in their implementation.
10. The regional organisations referred to in these conclusions are existing and future intergovernmental organisations or arrangements whose aim is to promote cooperation or integration in the Balkan region. »Regional meetings« includes meetings of these organisations and also ad hoc or informal meetings with similar aims. It also includes meetings with EU institutions in the context of the European agenda.
11. These arrangements are adopted on an interim basis.

Monitoring Regional Cooperation in South East Europe:

Republic of Macedonia

Martin Pechijareski

1. Background Information

During the 1990s the Republic of Macedonia experienced a peaceful transition to a new, democratic regime. Macedonia declared independence at the beginning of the 1990s, after the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia. The Constitution was adopted in 1991, defining the Republic of Macedonia as a sovereign, independent, democratic and social state. In 2001, ethnic tensions escalated when the Albanian Liberation Army (NLA) attacked Macedonian security forces in January 2001. Military actions mainly took place in the north-west part of the country where Albanians constitute a majority of the population. The fighting finally ceased in August 2001. Constitutional amendments were introduced with the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA) which was signed by the Macedonian and Albanian political elites under strong supervision by the international community. OFA has ensured the political stability of the country by enhanced inclusion of the Albanian as well as the other ethnicities. Moreover, OFA envisaged different types of mechanisms (double majority in the Parliament, laws on language and symbols, Committee on interethnic relations) in order to avoid further exclusion of ethnic minorities in Macedonia.

The Republic of Macedonia is a parliamentary democracy and has a multi-party system. The political system is divided into executive, legislative and judicial branches. The executive power of the Republic of Macedonia is bicephalous and divided between the government and the President of the Republic. The legislative power is vested in the Parliament, which is central and the most important institution of the country, representing all the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia.

During the past twenty years there have been a number of electoral cycles in the Republic of Macedonia. In the initial stages of independence, the ruling party was SDSM, leading the coalition Alliance for Macedonia. However, the first shift of power occurred in 1998 when the right-wing VMRO-DPMNE, in a coalition with Democratic Alternative and Democratic Party of the Albanians (DPA), won the election. Between 2002 and 2006 the ruling party was again SDSM in a coalition with the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI), a party that originated from NLA, which caused some controversies for the governing coalition. In the period between 2006 and 2008 VMRO-DPMNE governed in coalition with DPA. However, in 2008 VMRO-DPMNE for the first time in the history of Macedonian parliamentary democracy called snap elections, which they won. Since then, VMRO-DPMNE has been governing in coalition with DUI.

Macedonia has always been constructive in its relations with the international community (EU, NATO, USA). It was among the first countries in the region to sign the Association and Stabilization Agreement in 2001. Also, the Republic of Macedonia was granted candidate status for EU membership in 2005. Furthermore, Macedonia was on the brink of

joining NATO together with Croatia and Albania during the summit in Bucharest in 2008. However, regardless of the substantial efforts by the international community, and the United States of America above all, Macedonia did not join NATO because of the irrational policy of Greece, which vetoed Macedonia. In addition, the Republic of Macedonia and the United States of America have always enjoyed excellent bilateral relations. The United States formally recognized Macedonia in 1994 and in 2004 recognized the Republic of Macedonia under its constitutional name.

The name dispute between Greece and Macedonia represents a significant impediment for the regional cooperation of the Republic of Macedonia and especially with EU member states. Even though the Republic of Macedonia has been an EU candidate country for more than seven years now, accession negotiations have not commenced. According to the international community, the name dispute is political issue which should be solved by the two countries involved in direct negotiations within the framework of the United Nations.

Located at the heart of the Balkan peninsula, the Republic of Macedonia represents a significant geo-political factor in the process of building strong regional cooperation. However, there are several preconditions that need to be fulfilled in order to enhance regional cooperation. One of the crucial prerequisites for fruitful cooperation is building a modern road and railway infrastructure in accordance with European standards. To this end, Macedonia has to invest in the European route E-75 as part of European Corridor 10, which connects South-Eastern Europe with Turkey. Regional cooperation could also benefit from modernizing Corridor 8, which connects Albania and Bulgaria (Adriatic and Black Sea) through Macedonia.

Similar to the other countries in the region, Macedonia has a multi-ethnic and multi-con-

fessional character. It is a heterogeneous country in which differences with regard to religious experience, language and cultural tradition are mutually respected by all ethnicities: Macedonians, Albanians, Serbs, Roma, Vlachs, Turks and others. On one hand, these diversities represent opportunities to enhance regional cooperation, not only in the realm of politics and economics, but in culture and science as well. On the other hand, the abovementioned differences may also represent impediments for regional cooperation in the sense that ethnicities may support cooperation predominantly with their countries of origin. Thus, Macedonia should develop an inclusive and balanced regional cooperation strategy, which should include different ethnicities accordingly.

2. Country Analysis: Republic of Macedonia

Regional cooperation has proven to be a crucial factor in the economic, political and social development of South East European countries. Regional cooperation is also an essential prerequisite for the integration of South East European countries in the European Union. Regional initiatives represent a significant impetus for speedy regional integration. The Republic of Macedonia as an EU candidate country since 2005 has fulfilled regional criteria and participated in all of the selected regional initiatives since their initial agreements.

This research study analyses implementation of the regional cooperation initiatives in the Republic of Macedonia mainly through three general dimensions: implementation, local ownership and gender issues. The study focuses on how regional cooperation is implemented in two realms of society: justice and home affairs and social development. It is well known that regional cooperation in terms of the legislative framework and signed regional agreements is well developed; however, it is

more difficult to assess the factual level of regional cooperation among South East European countries.

This paper will proceed in three parts. The first part gives the factual background of the participation of the Republic of Macedonia in regional initiatives. The second includes an analysis of data gathered from primary (interviews) and secondary (desktop research) sources. Finally, the third part is dedicated to a conclusion and policy recommendations.

In the realm of justice and home affairs, Macedonia signed the Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre (SELEC) initiative in 2009, established under the auspices of SECI.[81] One has to underline, however, that Macedonia has been a member state of Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI) since its establishment in 1996.[82] Regarding the Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative (RAI) Macedonian membership dates back to 2000 when the Stability Pact Anti-corruption Initiative was founded in Sarajevo. Seven years later, in Podgorica, the initiative was renamed RAI in accordance with the transformation of the Stability Pact of Southeast Europe into the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC).[83] As the host country of the MARRI Regional Centre, the Republic of Macedonia has a significant role in the process of carrying out practical cooperation and activities within MARRI. The initiative itself was launched in 2003 by merging the Regional Return Initiative (RRI) and the Migration and Asylum Initiative (MAI).[84] The MARRI Regional Centre was established in 2004 in Skopje as a result of increased regional ownership of the initiative.[85]

Within the framework of social development initiatives, the Macedonian Employment Service Agency has been a member of the Centre of Public Employment Services of the Southeast European Countries since 2006 when the Partnership Protocol on the establishment of the Centre of Public Employment Services of Southeast European Countries was signed. Similar to the abovementioned initiatives, the membership of Macedonia in the South-Eastern Europe Health Network dates back to its very own foundation in 2001 as part of the Stability Pact for South East Europe. In 2010, SEEHN took over regional ownership of the initiative under the auspices of the RCC.[86] Finally, the Regional Programme for Social Security Coordination and Social Security Reforms in South-East Europe (RP-SSCSSR) is the only initiative whose implementation process has finished (in 2010). The initiative was launched by the Council of Europe in 2008, with a regional office in the Republic of Macedonia.

In order to evaluate implementation of the regional initiatives semi-structured interviews were conducted with relevant representatives in the Republic of Macedonia. Interviewees from regional initiatives in the field of justice and home affairs were fairly open and willing to talk. Similarly, the Macedonian representatives of social development initiatives have been responsive and cooperative.

Surprisingly, representatives of the Employment Service Agency were entirely uncooperative, unresponsive and unwilling to share any information. In addition, several interviews were conducted with relevant experts in the selected fields. Finding experts in the field of justice and home affairs was relatively easy; however, it was significantly more difficult to

---

81   See: http://www.secicenter.org/m485/SELEC.
82   Statement of Purpose for the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative, Geneva, 6 December 1996.
83   Historical Background of the Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative, available at: http://www.rai-see.org/about-us/historical-background.html
84   See: http://www.marri-rc.org/Default.aspx?mId=1&Lan=EN
85   Partnership Protocol on the establishment of the Centre

of Public Employment Services of Southeast European Countries, Sofia, 27 October 2006.
86   See: http://seehnsec.blogspot.com/p/about-see-health-network.html

2.1 Implementation

Implementation is defined as a static dimension, which implies that Macedonia has developed certain capacities and structures or has met required criteria in order to participate in regional initiatives. The level of implementation was assessed through analysis of the following indicators: legislation, administrative structure, technical structure, practices and procedures.

In the MARRI initiative, there has been a specific need for passing new laws, given that the MARRI Regional Centre is located in the Republic of Macedonia. For that reason, the law on ratification of the Agreement on the status and activities of the Regional Centre for Migration, Asylum and Refugees was enacted by the Macedonian Parliament in 2005. Another regional initiative's agreement which implied harmonization with the domestic legal system was the SELEC initiative. The Republic of Macedonia was among the first member states that ratified (the law came into force in February 2012) the SELEC Convention, which had been signed in December 2009 in Bucharest. Completion of the RP-SS-CSSR initiative in 2010 has resulted in another EU twinning project entitled »Strengthening the capacities for effective implementation of the acquis in the field of freedom of movement for workers«.[87] According to the interviewee this project will be launched in 2013 and will require new laws to be enacted. In all other initiatives there has not been a specific need to introduce new laws.

According to the interviewees, the lack of further internal legal adjustments in the other regional initiatives is twofold. On one

locate experts in the field of social development.

hand, some of the initiatives were established by agreements and memorandums which were a sufficient basis for embarking on implementation in the member states. On the other hand, being an EU candidate country since 2005, the Republic of Macedonia has already established the necessary legal framework and has met regional criteria. Moreover, in some of the initiatives (RAI), as the interviewee pointed out, even EU standards have been met. For instance, the last Progress Report of the European Commission regarding anti-corruption policy states that the legislative framework is in place and capacity has been strengthened slightly. What remains a great challenge, however, is successful implementation of the laws, which requires greater efforts on the part of the institutions.[88]

The concreteness of the legislation and regulations varies among the different regional initiatives. For instance, MARRI and SEEHN initiatives have more specific regulations, namely action plans. Regarding the latter initiative, the Macedonian Institute for Public Health is obliged to develop a two-year action plan which includes concrete actions and events coordinated by the Management Board of the SEEHN network. Similarly, the MARRI initiative adopts regulations initiated by the relevant representatives of ministries of foreign affairs and approved by the Forum of Ministers of Home Affairs. In contrast, the RAI initiative has rather broad and general regulations. The most specific case in terms of regulations and action plans is the SELEC initiative. Given its field of action, SELEC includes specific regulations and operational plans which always result in concrete actions in the fight against organized crime in the region.

Regarding administrative structures, in most of the regional initiatives it was not

---

87　The Republic of Macedonia is the only beneficiary country in this project.

88　Progress Report on the Republic of Macedonia, European Commission, p. 12.

necessary to establish new units or bodies. According to the respondents, what the national representatives of the initiatives have done amounts to the systematization and coordination of existing capacities. For example, the SELEC initiative and its liaison officer are located in the Ministry for Home Affairs where administrative capacities were utilized within the sector of International Police Co-operation. Even though the new body did not originate as an immediate consequence of RAI implementation, Macedonia has created an inter-ministerial unit consisting of 18 members representing all bodies involved in the fight against corruption. In the MARRI initiative, apart from the regional centre in Skopje which serves as secretariat of the initiative, there has been no need to create separate bodies at national level. Similarly, when it comes to the expansion of staff capacities, all of the interviewees underlined that there was no need for additional employment. An exceptional case is the Social Security Coordination and Social Reforms (RP-SSCSSR) initiative in which two programme officers were employed as part of the implementation team of the Regional Office in Macedonia.

The implementation of the regional initiatives has not had a major impact in terms of seconded staff in the regional bodies. Only in the SELEC initiative does the Republic of Macedonia have its own liaison officer, located in Bucharest, and a representative on the Council of SELEC who is appointed by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

When it comes to ensuring new facilities, in some of the regional initiatives there was no substantial need to purchase new premises. Also, interviewees pointed out the lack of financial resources as a serious obstacle to expansion of existing facilities. In other initiatives, such as MARRI, the Republic of Macedonia as a host country of the regional centre had to provide new capacities. The funds

were provided by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, which gave a strong impetus for regional cooperation in this field. All other technical capacities such as computers, desks, printers and so on were bought through international donations. Similarly, in the SEEHN initiative there was a need for new facilities. Macedonia was due to become host country of the Secretariat of the South-Eastern Health Network in February 2013. The interviewee underlined that the Institute for Public Health is currently working on a project to build new capacities which shall include two office rooms and a meeting room. The construction activities have finished and the Institute for Public Health will be inaugurated by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Macedonia on 3 February 2013. The budget and the technical equipment were provided by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia. Also, space were provided (rented) for the implementation period of the RP-SSCSSR initiative, which lasted for two years. In the SELEC initiative there was no need to purchase or rent new facilities. However, entirely new technical equipment was purchased with funds provided by the SELEC regional centre.

Most of the initiatives share similar experiences when it comes to practices and procedures for implementation. In this connection, respondents underlined the lack of a formally established set of practices and procedures regarding national meetings. However, the convocation of semi-formal or informal meetings is fairly developed. Meetings are called when there is a need, usually two or three times a week. Similarly, the level of the meetings is determined by the topic and issue. Thus, some of the meetings are operational, while others are convened at the highest level, in which ministers and national coordinators or directors of the initiatives participate.

The significance of organizations from the civil sector has been recognized by the na-

tional institutions responsible for implementing regional initiatives. The majority of interviewees answered positively regarding the inclusion and consultation of these organizations. In this connection, the director of the MARRI Regional Centre, Mr Trpe Stojanoski, highlighted that the Centre has developed cooperation with civil sector organizations in order to take their views into consideration and follow up their activities, presentations and publications. Moreover, the collaboration goes beyond the non-governmental sector by including higher educational institutions. The MARRI Regional Centre offers possibilities for students by co-organizing (with the universities) internships and other practical activities based on the memorandum for cooperation. Given the nature of its work, the Institute for Public Health has developed cooperation with the non-governmental sector mainly in the promotion of projects or publications related to public health. An exception is the SELEC initiative; bearing in mind the type of activities performed and information circulated within SELEC, there has not been inclusion of or consultation with non-governmental organizations. One must conclude, however, that in most of the initiatives cooperation with the non-governmental sector is rather broad and not precisely defined. As we shall see below that civil sector organizations are not included or consulted in the agenda setting of regional initiatives.

2.2 Local Ownership

The second dimension analysed in the study is local ownership. It is a dynamic dimension which concerns the capacities of national institutions in regional initiatives. The general assumption is that the higher the level of local ownership the higher the quality and level of implementation of activities within the regional initiatives. In order to evaluate local ownership, the following indicators were cho-

sen: resources, agenda setting, know-how, eagerness of the state and decision making.

Regarding resources, MARRI initiative follows the same budget formula as RCC; that is to say, each member state's share in the total budget is determined in proportion to its GDP. On this basis, Croatia's contribution is the largest, while the participation of Montenegro is the smallest in the total budget. The rest of the countries have an equal contribution. According to the interviewee, the total budget of the MARRI initiative does not exceed 350,000 euros annually. According to the Memorandum of Understanding the member states of the SEEHN initiative are divided into four categories regarding their contribution to the total annual budget.[89] Thus, the Republic of Macedonia falls into the second category, covering 10 per cent of the total annual budget (202,000 euros). In practice, however, the interviewee from the Institute of Public Health stated that Macedonia's total contribution is higher, given that in-kind contributions exceed the abovementioned amount. While the SELEC initiative follows similar procedures regarding resources, in the RAI initiative Macedonia pays an annual participation fee of 24,000 euros.

The analysis of local ownership through the prism of agenda setting reveals significant diversities among the regional initiatives. In some of the initiatives there is recognizable national agenda setting, while in others, agenda setting is missing. For instance, within the MARRI initiative national institutions are fairly closely involved in the process of creating the national agenda. In this connection, when it comes to convening national meetings, the national coordinator determines the questions and issues to be discussed at the meetings. In the SEEHN initiative, meet-

---

89 South-eastern Europe Health Network, Memorandum of Understanding, p. 14, available at: http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/108663/SEE_MoU.pdf

ings are held on a regular basis between the Director of the Institute of Public Health and the professional collegium. In contrast, in the RAI initiative there are hardly any meetings at national level in accordance with the relevant representatives of the ministries (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy). In the SELEC initiative the national meetings are convened by the corresponding sectoral representatives within the Ministry of Home Affairs with regard to ongoing issues in the fight against organized crime.

In addition, the analysis of agenda setting in terms of regional meetings confirms the variety of practices among the initiatives. Each member state of MARRI can raise certain questions or issues that might be included in the regional meetings. At the same time, MARRI allows self-promotion and representation of national priorities. On the basis of these priorities, the chair country (currently Bosnia and Herzegovina) has the key role in shaping regional priorities and the strategy for implementing regional cooperation. Similarly, in the RP-SSCSSR initiative, regional meetings were convened by the regional office once they had been initiated by the relevant ministries. In this connection, the regional office in the RP-SSCSSR initiative has more of a technical and administrative role in contrast to the other initiatives, where regional offices have a more influential role (act as Secretariats or Councils).

Conversely, in RAI there have been no regional meetings, with the exception of occasional summer schools. The SEEHN initiative has the most fixed agenda setting. The initiatives for regional meetings come from the member states and are channelled through the Secretariat of the Health Network. However, the prerogatives of the member states to pose questions and activities are limited to issues included in the annual work plan.

In this sense, there is no room for proposing ad hoc activities. In contrast, the agenda setting in terms of regional meetings in SELEC is fluid, given that most of the meetings are operational and task-oriented.

Another question with regard to local ownership was the involvement of non-governmental organizations in the agenda setting of regional initiatives. Unlike the abovementioned general cooperation with non-governmental sector, there have been no consultations with the civil sector organizations in the process of establishing the agenda.

Eagerness of the state is another factor in the local ownership dimension which depicts the commitment of the country with regard to regional initiatives. In this connection, there are few significant differences among the initiatives. The general impression is that when it comes to national-level meetings, usually relevant institutions or national coordinators convene formal or semi-formal meetings, depending on the issue at hand. While the former are official, organized at managerial level between ministers and directors, the latter are frequent operational meetings, usually called as needed. High-level national meetings usually take place twice a year. On the other hand, regional meetings are initiated and organized by the regional bodies of the initiative or the member states.

Decision making is the final facet of local ownership. According to the interviewees no specific decision-making process has been established related exclusively to regional initiatives. Given that most of the initiatives are hosted by governmental or ministerial bodies this process overlaps with the procedures and rules of these institutions. In the SELEC initiative, the relevant head of the sector is responsible for undertaking lower level decisions usually related to concrete actions or measures. However, in specific cases, decisions are made by the Director or the Minister of Home

Affairs. Moreover, the Minister is the one who nominates or accredits Macedonian representatives in the regional bodies of SELEC. RPSSCSSR and RAI share similar procedures in a sense that decisions regarding regional initiatives are made by the relevant sectors in the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and approved and signed by the relevant ministers.

2.3 Gender Issues

Gender is the last dimension encompassed by the research study. It is a cross-cutting dimension which concerns the level of inclusion and participation of women in regional initiatives. Given that participation of the women in initiatives reflects their general inclusion in state institutions, one might have expected that Macedonia is doing well in this realm. Along the same lines is the conclusion drawn from the interviewees' answers which confirms that Macedonia fulfils not only the regional criteria but EU standards as well. In all of the initiatives women are fairly included; moreover, most of them occupy senior positions in the hierarchical structure of institutions, according to their educational and professional background. For instance, in the SELEC initiative where the inclusion of the women is exceptional, the liaison officer in Bucharest is a woman. In addition, the head of the national central bureau of Interpol and the Minister of Home Affairs are women, too. Similarly, in the RAI initiative, the head of the sector for fighting corruption is a woman. Another example of inclusion of women comes from the SEEHN initiative where until recently a woman representative from Macedonia was general coordinator of the entire health network.

3. Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

In terms of building national capacities in the analysed regional initiatives Macedonia has made significant efforts for their successful implementation. Nevertheless, regional cooperation remains an essential challenge as the Republic of Macedonia needs to undertake additional steps in order to strengthen regional cooperation processes.

This study confirms that implementation of the regional initiatives has been successful analysed from a legal perspective. In general, all member states, including Macedonia, have successfully met the legislative criteria. Concretely, the Republic of Macedonia had to introduce new laws in two of the initiatives (SELEC and MARRI), while the rest have been ratified by agreements or memorandums. Regarding the expansion of administrative capacities there have not been significant structural shifts within the national institutions responsible for implementation of the initiatives. Basically, they conducted functional redistribution of existing capacities (both human and technical resources) in order to respond to the needs of regional cooperation. In some of the initiatives lack of funds represented a serious obstacle to purchasing new technical capacities. It has been difficult to distinguish established sets of practices and procedures. Most of the initiatives are characterized by flexible practices and procedures defined by the issues analysed at the given moment.

Until 2008, regional initiatives had been to a great extent externally driven due to the lack of local/regional ownership. This issue was recognized by the EU as well as by the regional actors. In response to the new challenges that the Western Balkan countries were encountering by that time, the RCC was launched in 2008. Consequently, in the past few years there has been an upward trend

when it comes to the level of local ownership in regional cooperation processes. This study confirms the positive tendency, but at the same time reveals some of the weaknesses of the initiatives. In most of them, the low level of local ownership is particularly visible in co-operation with non-governmental organizations, especially in the process of agenda setting.

Undoubtedly a significant issue, but not crucial when it comes to implementation of regional initiatives is the question of gender representation and practices of gender mainstreaming. Analysis of women's inclusion indicates a high level of women's participation in regional initiatives in Macedonia. Moreover, representation of women or gender equality is evident not only in numbers but, more importantly, in the structural hierarchy of the national institutions responsible for implementing initiatives.

Another facet which was not a direct subject of analysis but was highlighted as a serious impediment to the implementation of regional initiatives is the politicization of Macedonian society. As was pointed out by some of the relevant experts, shifts of political elites in power frequently result in numerous replacements of the respective stakeholders in the initiatives. In this sense, continuity in the regional cooperation processes was regarded as a crucial factor in successful implementation of the initiatives. Thus, in order to prevent these detrimental effects one has to avoid political intervention in the realm of regional cooperation. Moreover, the selection of candidates should be based on merit; priority should be given to professionals according to their expertise and experience in the relevant field.

The level of effectiveness of regional initiatives should be raised. Concrete actions are needed with measurable outcomes. It is high time for regional initiatives to operate less on a declaratory basis and more efficiently, focusing on crucial matters. In most of the initiatives long-term strategies are too broad. As a result, it is difficult to genuinely assess their progress in the process of implementation. In order to address this issue, regional initiatives should include measurable indicators which will serve as guidance through the evaluation process. Another problematic aspect is budgetary expenditure. A large share of the initiatives' budgets is spent on meetings, conferences and press releases without appropriate follow-up activities. Reallocation of budgets is needed which would see more money spent on improving human resources and expansion of technical capacities.

References

Convention of the Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre, Bucharest, 09.12.2009, available at: http://www.selec.org/docs/PDF/SELEC%20Convention%20%5Bsigned%20 on% 2009.12.2009%5D.pdf (last accessed: 23.01.2013)

Employment Service Agency of the Republic of Macedonia, http://www.zvrm.gov.mk/

IPA Twining Project Fiche, MK10/IB/SO/01: Strengthening the capacities for effective implementation of the acquis in the field of freedom of movement for workers, available at: http://www.wbif.eu/ipa_projects/1825

Memorandum of Understanding, Establishment of the Regional Forum of the Migration, Asylum and Refugee Return Initiative, available at: http://www.marrirc.org/upload/Documents/

MARRI%20Main%20Documents/MoU%20on%20Establishment%20of%20MARRI%20 Regional%20Forum%20-%202%20July%202004.pdf, (last accessed: 24.01.2013)

Memorandum of Understanding on the Future of the South-Eastern Europe Health Network in the Framework of the South East European Co-operation Process, (last accessed: 24.01.2013)

Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of the Republic of Macedonia, http://www.mtsp.gov.mk/

Ministry of Health of the Republic of Macedonia, http://www.moh.gov.mk/

Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative, www.marri-rc.org.

Ministry of Home Interior Affairs of the Republic of Macedonia, http://www.mvr.gov.mk/

Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Macedonia, http://www.pravda.gov.mk/

Partnership Protocol on establishment of the Centre of Public Employment Services of Southeast European Countries, Sofia, 27.10.2006.

Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative, www.rai-see.org

Southeast European Cooperative Initiative/Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre, www.secicenter.org.

South-Eastern Europe Health Network, seehnsec.blogspot.com.

Statement of Purpose for the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative, Geneva, 06.12.1996.

Social Security Coordination and Social Security Reforms, http://www.coe.int

Report on the activities on the Regional Cooperation Council Secretariat, available at: http://www.rcc.int

Republic of Macedonia Progress Report 2012, European Commission available at: http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2012/package/mk_rapport_2012_en.pdf(last accessed: 24.01.2013)

Закон за Ратификација на договорот за статусот и активностите на регионалниот центар на Регионалниот Центар на Регионалната Иницијатива за Миграции, Азил, и Бегалци МАРРИ со седиште во Скопје, Сл. Весник на Р. Македонија, бр.83 од 29.09.2005 година

Interviewed Officials

Trpe Stojanoski, Director of MARRI Regional Office, 17.10.2012

Viktor Dimovski, Former Ambassador, 2.11.2012

Vlado Lazarevik, Former Deputy Health Minister, 16.11.2012

Official from Ministry of Internal Affairs, 30.10.2012

Official from the World Health Organization, 18.12.2012

Official from the Ministry for Justice, 24.10.2012

Two Officials from the Ministry for Labour and Social Policy, 17. 11.2012

Official from the Institute for Public Health in Skopje Macedonia, 27.10.2012

Former Official from the Ministry of Justice

Monitoring Regional Cooperation in South East Europe:

Montenegro

Nenad Koprivica, Dženita Brčvak, and Emir Kalač

Introduction

Regional cooperation is a principle of the highest importance for political stability, security and economic development in South East Europe. It is an issue which cannot be questioned or put on hold. The moment they expressed the desire to become a member of the EU club, all the states from the region were given the task of creating the best possible conditions for regional cooperation to develop.

Montenegro declared independence on 3 June 2006 following a referendum held on 21 May 2006. The priorities of foreign policy, whose conduct and guidance were taken over by the government of Montenegro, are: Euro-Atlantic integration, regional cooperation and good relations with neighbours, as well as cooperation at the multilateral and bilateral levels.

A key political structure, which has contributed greatly to the regaining of Montenegro's independence, is the long-lasting and current ruling DPS-SDP[90] coalition. DPS ruled the country after the collapse of the socialist system. This party initially supported the policies of Slobodan Milosevic, former President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, but in 1997 there was a split within it. After the split, the DPS continued to function, but with a different programme. The basic feature of the party was a shift away from Milosevic's

policies (a group of politicians loyal to Milosevic left the DPS and founded the Socialist People's Party) and the revitalization of the idea of Montenegrin independence. The smaller coalition party, the SDP, provided great support and, together with the minority parties, the idea of renewing independence has been realised.

The greatest foreign-policy progress has been achieved in the area of integration into the European Union by pursuing ongoing obligations under the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA). The process of accession negotiations started on 29 June 2012 in Brussels, at the first intergovernmental conference between Montenegro and the EU. What needs to be emphasized, as a very visible achievement of the EU integration process, is the fact that citizens of Montenegro travel without a visa to the Schengen area. Furthermore, the Agreement on readmission between Montenegro and the EU entered into force in January 2008.

Relations with NATO are also moving toward Montenegro's membership. Having successfully met its obligations under the Partnership for Peace, Montenegro received an invitation to join the MAP (Membership Action Plan) in late 2009, which was the confirmation of its progress in Euro-Atlantic integration. At the last summit in Chicago, »the Heads of State and Government of NATO member states unreservedly welcomed the significant progress of Montenegro in the path of accession the Alliance«. The »open

---

90 DPS (Democratic Party of Socialists), SDP (Social Democratic Party).

door« policy was confirmed at the Summit and it is expected that Montenegro will become a new member of NATO in the next round of expansion. In addition to political, economic and defence reforms, contingents of Montenegrin soldiers on several occasions have participated in the ISAF mission in Afghanistan (a fifth contingent of soldiers is in Afghanistan at the time of writing).

Developing bilateral relations is another of Montenegro's foreign policy priorities. »Montenegrin–US relations are marked by numerous historical, political, economic and cultural ties, which have particularly intensified since the restoration of Montenegrin independence«.[91] The role of the United States in NATO and other international organizations, but also its relations with partners from the EU and the region, are reasons for maintaining good relations with this country for Montenegro.

As regards the international financial institutions, Montenegro became the 185th Member of the International Monetary Fund in January 2007. In the IMF, Montenegro is represented by the Central Bank and the governor of the Central Bank of Montenegro is the Governor of the IMF. After joining the IMF, Montenegro became a full member of the World Bank with the entry fee and the rights and obligations arising from membership in the group consisting of: the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the International Development Association (IDA), the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA).

In political terms, regional cooperation is

crucial and a catalyst for reconciliation and good neighbourly relations. All of the Western Balkan countries, including Montenegro, have opted for Europe and thus have agreed to the terms of such EU instruments as the Stabilisation and Association Agreements and the so-called Thessaloniki Agenda of 2003. Regional cooperation is considered to be the most important qualifying indicator of these countries' readiness to integrate in the EU.

When it comes to economic interests, Montenegro, like other countries from the region, is faced with the limited size of its market and ability to step forward as an independent entity. In such circumstances, there is no other option but to enhance economic regional cooperation, which will, hopefully, provide for foreign direct investments and also pool some individual initiatives. Taken together, this will lead to an increase in the living standards of the whole region.

Another important issue in this regard is security interdependence. Given the fact that all these countries (except Albania) were part of one state, but mainly because of the conflict-ridden dissolution of that state, one could claim that security interdependence between these states indeed exists and that security threats can easily travel across borders and affect each regional state's internal order. When it comes to the security agenda in South East Europe , no issue is a matter for a single country. As explained by Koneska (2008), many issues bind these countries together: »They share a common history and institutional legacy, have similar languages and culture, and a great volume of cross-border transactions (mostly due to having belonged to a single state and the inherited family, friends, business and other relations)«.

---

91   Radio Slobodna Evropa's website, Nezaobilazan stav SAD u kreiranju crnogorske spoljne politike (Inevitable US position in the creation of Montenegrin foreign policy) [Accessed 21.8.2012]. Available at: http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/content/nezaobilazan_stav_sad_u_kreiranju_crnogorske_spoljne_politike/24570458.html

Implementation of Regional Initiatives in Montenegro

Having set forth its main foreign policy goals – integration in the EU and NATO – the government of Montenegro started to implement all the tasks necessary to achieve those goals. As fostering regional cooperation was one of the components, it soon acquired double importance for Montenegro: it meant a step towards the EU, as well as a necessary element of the country's stability, as relations with all neighbouring states are very close. Montenegro is part of all relevant regional initiatives, namely: the Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative (MARRI); the Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative (RAI); the Regional Programme on Social Security Coordination and Social Security Reforms in South-East Europe (RP-SSCSSR); the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative/Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre (SECI/SELEC); the South-Eastern Europe Health Network (SEEHN); the Centre of Public Employment Services of Southeast European Countries (CPESSEC); and many others.

Legal framework

Signing and ratification of all relevant conventions were necessary preconditions for taking part in the above-listed initiatives. Formal adoption of these documents was conducted smoothly; however, when it comes to implementation, many issues remain challenging. With regard to designing the legal framework in the field of home and justice affairs – for example, the rule of law – the situation differed depending on the initiative. In most cases, however, no new laws were necessary for the initiative to be made operational, with the exception of the SELEC. This will be elaborated below.

One of the first regional initiatives in the field of rule of law with which Montenegro became involved was MARRI, in 2004, when government signed the Memorandum of Understanding for the Establishment of the Regional Forum of the Migration, Asylum and Refugees Return Initiative. Two years after joining MARRI, Montenegro, now an independent state, passed the Law on Asylum which derogated certain provisions of the former Law on the Movement and Residence of Aliens. The new law identified contemporary issues in this area and was more precise than the previous one. Besides national legislation, MARRI also defines regional two-year strategies and action plans. The action plan for 2011–2013 is designed in such a »way as to adapt its objectives and activities to a new state of play in which Member States have already adopted the legal framework and developed institutional capacities in the process of harmonization with the EU to a considerable extent«. Montenegro is both legally and institutionally developed in this regard.

Montenegro became member state of RAI first by signing the Memorandum of Understanding concerning Cooperation in Fighting Corruption through the South Eastern European Anti-Corruption Initiative in 2007 in Zagrand by adopting the Conclusion and Decisions of the 11th SPAI Steering Group Meeting from October 2007. This is when the Initiative was renamed in accordance with the transformation of the Stability Pact into the Regional Cooperation Council. In Montenegro, RAI was a mechanism through which government officials adopted new knowledge and grasped the meaning and objectives of the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC). RAI was based on the 10 joint measures for fighting corruption in South-eastern Europe, which the states agreed to accept as their framework of action. This was particularly important, bearing in mind that Montenegro as an independent state first approached UNCAC in 2006, so the new knowledge in this regard was of high importance to its state officials.

Therefore, regional meetings under the RAI served as a tool for exchanging information and adopting best practices from the region in the fight against corruption

When the SELEC Convention was signed (2009) the Montenegrin legal system did not have any legal document that could regulate appointing a representative of the Police Directorate to international organisations or similar entities. Since then, the government of Montenegro adopted the Regulation on Police Representatives on 5 March 2009 to laid down the title, status, time, wage and other issues of importance for the performance of police representatives when appointed to international organisations. Certain provisions of importance to SELEC are also incorporated in the Law on Police and supporting regulations and ordinances. With regard to this regional initiative, Montenegro still needs to ratify the Protocol on Privileges and Immunity, however, which gives SELEC the same status as a diplomatic mission.

Initiatives in the field of social development are very similar to the aforementioned three initiatives in the area of the rule of law in terms of institutional and administrative capacities or the way in which regional initiatives are implemented at the national level.

Regional Programme Coordination of Social Security and Social Protection Reform in South East Europe (SSCSSR) is a joint programme of the European Commission and the Council of Europe, within the Multi-beneficiary IPA programme, which lasted from 1 March 2008 to August 2011.[92] The Council of Europe was in charge of implementation and the regional office was located in Skopje. Key objectives of the programme were improving

coordination of social protection systems in the region (Southeast Europe and Turkey),[93] but also overcoming deficiencies and compliance with European standards in social protection.[94] As for Montenegro, implementation of this programme involved the following institutions: the Ministry of Labour and Social Care, the Ministry of Health, the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund and the Health Insurance Fund. Local Programme Officers also worked on the project (mostly providing technical assistance). The Programme was implemented by the Steering Committee, an independent body comprising representatives of all countries. The committee member for Montenegro was Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Care, and her replacement was a Senior Advisor at the Ministry. SC held nine meetings (the fourth took place in Montenegro in December 2009) and its main role was »advising the Programme Regional Office, the Council of Europe and the European Commission on all issues regarding the content and progress of the Programme and informing competent authorities in each state on the activities and plans for the development of the Programme. Also, current issues in the field of social security were discussed at these meetings.«

The legal framework for involvement in the Centre of Public Employment Services of Southeast European Countries (CPESSEC) is provided by the Law on Employment and the Statute of the Employment Agency of Montenegro. The current legal framework, including legal acts by which the initiative was es-

---

92   »Initially, it was intended to run the Programme until 30 November 2010, but given that they spent all the allocated funds weren't spent, the European Commission has extended the project until August 2011. « Interview with SSCSSR representative, 22.11.2012

93   Countries participating in the Programme are: Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Albania, Kosovo and, as already mentioned – Turkey.

94   RP-SSCSSR was preceded by the CARDS Programme of support for the institutions, implemented in 2004–2008. The importance of this programme lies in expanding knowledge on the coordination of social security, the establishment of networks of civil servants and, of course, the development of political contacts.

tablished, is precise enough, so there was no need for amendments or the adoption of new laws.

Derived from the Stability Pact, the SEEHN network was established in 2001 in order to foster peace, reconciliation and health care in the region. The legal framework is provided by the charters of Dubrovnik, Skopje and Banja Luka, as well as the Memorandum of Understanding. The Memorandum is a legally-binding document for all members, which led to the establishment of institutional mechanisms for maintaining regional cooperation in the field of health development. This document is, among other things, the legal basis for the establishment of a regional Secretariat, which is based in Skopje. This document promotes the following principles: regional ownership; partnership; transparency and accountability; complementarities; sustainability; equal and active participation of all countries; allocation of resources and activities based on needs assessment of the countries; decentralization of activities and resources; and ultimately, efficiency (Article 3). Pledges are the key political documents for the functioning of the initiative. As noted in one SEEHN document: »The Dubrovnik Pledge, signed by the ministers of health on 2 September 2001, is a cornerstone agreement for cooperation and action on health. This is the first ever political document on cross-border health development in the SEE region. « Through SEEHN, Montenegro has been involved in projects from which it has received benefits in terms of training of professionals in various fields and participation in international conferences. Within the framework of the Network, Montenegro has established a Regional Centre for Health Development for Non-communicable Diseases. In this area, it is a reference centre for ten countries through which they will work on the prevention and control of chronic non-communicable diseases.

Each of initiatives presented here has its own action plans which are either annual or long-term, as in the case of the Regional Programme on Social Security Coordination and Social Security Reforms, which ran for 33 months.

Administrative and Technical Structures

According to the research findings, partnerships in regional initiatives have not caused any significant changes in terms of administrative structures. There has been no introduction or creation of new units to deal with the tasks under specific initiatives and – this is particularly important – no new employment. People dealing with regional initiatives are mostly engaged from the relevant ministries or agencies already working on similar to those of the initiatives. Therefore, their engagement in regional initiative is mostly – and sometimes only – secondary. During the interviews, respondents complained that, due to numerous commitments within their regular work, they are often left with little time to deal with tasks under regional initiatives. Furthermore, some of them consider their role in particular initiatives as primarily coordinative and thus have tried to strengthen such capacities and do not recognise a need for employing extra staff. On the other hand, Montenegro has delegated one representative to MARRI regional centre in Skopje and one representative from the Police Directorate to the SELEC centre in Bucharest, where this person deals with the issues of police and customs. It is also worth stressing that the persons engaged in SECI are the same ones now engaged in SELEC, although these two initiatives have slightly different responsibilities. Cooperation between the Employment Agency and CPESSEC takes place within the regular activities, so there was no need for new employment.

One finding uncovered during research with regard to training is that training is organised mostly by the regional initiatives' bodies and not by the national coordinators. Also, a gap was remarked upon in the transfer of specific knowledge and experiences during these training courses. The answer most often given during the interviews was, as one CPESSEC representative underlined: »the colleagues (from all participating countries) who are responsible for statistical reporting attended some training, but it was organized within CPESSEC«. This applies to all initiatives. Employees in the Department for International Relations and European Integrations within the Ministry of Health, such as the national coordinator and his deputy, are in charge of SEEHN activities in Montenegro. These employees have undergone a number of training courses, but discontinuity regarding the transfer of specific knowledge and skills was pointed out as a problem. As underlined by one of our interlocutors, »the Assistant Minister, who worked in this post before, left the Ministry, as well as a colleague who also worked on the same job, so that no one provided them with any experience, and they had to teach themselves everything and to do everything on their own«.

A good example of the inclusion of a wider set of stakeholders was the SSCSSR. Besides formal meetings, multiple educational programmes were conducted within this initiative, in which representatives of Montenegrin institutions took part. These activities[95] of multiple importance were attended not only by representatives of the Ministry of Labour

and Social Care, but also of the Health Insurance Fund, the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Finance.

In terms of technical structures, almost nothing has changed. All of the respondents said they use same premises and equipment as when they are working in their regular job.

Practices and Procedures for Implementation of Regional Initiatives

The practices and procedures for implementation of all regional initiatives have one thing in common: meetings at the national level are mainly organized on one-off basis, in other words, when there is a need for wider consultations with different stakeholders. This is particularly applicable to rule of law initiatives. However, there are certain cases when other institutions than national coordinators and their assistants are involved in these meetings. All of the respondents, for example, stated that there have been many occasions when representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration participated in certain phases of regional activities. Depending on the initiative, different stakeholders (ministries, agencies) are invited to consultations. For instance, RAI often organises consultations with the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights; SELEC is mostly in contact with Ministry of the Interior and the Customs Directorate; MARRI, on the other hand, often consults the Office for Refugees, the Police Directorate, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the Statistical Bureau of Montenegro. Meetings are initiated by the national authority which is responsible for addressing the issue which is the subject of the relevant initiative. Therefore, in the area of home and justice affairs, meetings are mostly initiated by the Police Directorate, the Directorate for the Anticorruption Initiative and the Ministry of the Interior.

---

95 Themes of these meetings were diverse: schools, social security coordination, exchange of information and social security, health care and pension insurance, capacity building and institutional development in the process of negotiation and adoption of bilateral agreements, reform of pension systems, coordination of pensions for persons with disabilities, visits to the EU and the Council of Europe, etc. Interview with SSCSSR representative, 22.11.2012.

Meetings are more often organised within the field of social development. Meetings within SSCSSR, for instance, were held regularly. Given that the Ministry of Labour and Social Care was responsible for the coordination of national stakeholders, the Ministry communicated with other relevant institutions on an ad hoc basis, depending on current needs and priorities. As for the regional level, two conferences are held annually at the level of executives and at the expert level (at the beginning and at the end of the year). The directors and/or their assistants attend the first ones. Expert conferences are intended for professional staff, although both participate in them. »The host state plans events and topics, in line with current developments in the labour market. Some members volunteer to organize meetings on a specific topic, outside their presidency«.

Civil society organisations are rarely (or almost never) invited to consultations when the agenda for regional initiatives' meetings in the area of the rule of law is to be set. As underlined by respondents, this is due to the sensitive nature of the issues concerned: »since these are mainly operational activities with some degree of secrecy, which require exchange of information held by other agencies and which are only for police use, there is very limited space for consultation and involvement of CSOs«. Nevertheless, when conducting certain activities which are of high importance both to national authorities and regional initiatives, national coordinators of all initiatives, including ones in the area of the rule of law, seek expert help.

Civil society is, on the other hand, involved in agenda design in the field of social development initiatives. The Employment Agency regularly cooperates with non-governmental organizations, and »consultations with NGOs in setting the agenda depend on the topics and on the level of involvement of NGOs in some

segments of the Agency's work«. Through CPESSEC activities there were no special activities with the NGO sector. However, cooperation with NGOs is reflected for example in the implementation of public work programmes in the fields of education and social welfare (teaching assistants for children with special needs, learning support, solar workshops), ecology (environmental protection, animal and plant life, protection of water, forests and so on), life in the community (neighbourhood assistance, home assistance, development of rural areas), tourism (souvenirs, marking tourist trails/roads) and so on.

Decision-making within all initiatives is based on absolute equality of states and decisions are made by consensus. There is no standard voting; the suggestions of all states are considered equally. The same applies to agenda setting.

Local Ownership

Although regional initiatives are directed mainly from their headquarters, and although their activities usually are conducted by persons and national authorities directly involved with certain initiatives, it is also important for national governments to demonstrate a readiness to be included in these activities. Respondents were asked to explain several issues (budget, agenda setting, decision making and so on) in order to describe the attitude of government bodies toward regional initiatives.

Resources

In terms of allocation of the national budget for implementing activities within the regional initiatives, countries are obliged to make contributions. The amount and regular payment of contributions varies from initiative to initiative, but depends on a country's GDP. Montenegro belongs to the group of member states

that pay minimal contribution fees. This applies to all regional initiatives. Montenegro, for instance, regularly pays 24,000 euros for RAI (this is, however, a fixed fee paid by all member states). Montenegro annually allocates 17,500 euros to MARRI, but to date the fees for 2012 and 2011 have not been paid; 25,620 euros are allocated for activities within SELEC. The CPESSEC Centre has no budget' the host state covers the cost of organizing meetings (rooms, translation services, preparation of conferences, local transport, organizing joint meetings). Participating countries cover transportation costs and the participation of their delegates. Each state allocates funds in its budget for conferences and the host country pays rent, site hosting and domain name for the website, which annually costs about 300 euros. This sum is paid to the National Employment Service of the Republic of Serbia. RP-SSCSSR is a project funded by the EU and the Council of Europe, which is why states did not have to pay a financial contribution. As for the SEEHN, the Memorandum of Understanding on the Future of the South-Eastern Europe Health Network within the Framework of the South East European Cooperation Process (2008) envisages Montenegro's contribution to financing the work of the Secretariat at 5 per cent, about 10,000 euros a year (p. 16).

Agenda Setting, Country Readiness and Decision Making

Setting the agenda and pushing issues of either organisational or self-interest is one of the main indicators of how a country perceives the importance of any organisation, in this case the regional initiatives. But, again, it is also an indicator of how a country perceives its own role in the initiative and how it is perceived by other member states. Another important step is to push these issues in one's »own backyard«. However, according

to research, Montenegro has done little in this direction.

Although national meetings are organised, they are usually based on one-off needs and tend to be part of some larger regional project that demands national consultations. Meetings are usually initiated by the government body directly responsible for implementing regional activities. Decision-making is the responsibility of the highest ranking officials, such as minsters, directors and national coordinators. Therefore, in the area of home and justice affairs, consultations are initiated by the Ministry of the Interior, the Directorate for the Anticorruption Initiative, the Office for Refugees and sometimes the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration. Again, there are very few or almost no cases in which CSOs were included in the agenda-setting process.

As for the regional level, the agenda is agreed by all member states, at joint meetings. The general impression, after the interviews, is that states are equal in terms of making proposals and their consideration by other member states, and that there were no examples of agenda-setting or taking decisions without the approval of all member states. The important issues for Montenegro are discussed, again, at the top level and also in line with current government policy priorities. One way to influence the agenda is when the country chairs the initiative. For instance, in MARRI, the agenda is always set by the chairing country and the MARRI centre. The host country sets the topics to be discussed at regional meetings within CPESSEC, as well. »It happens that at the end of a cycle states jointly propose topics for the next managerial or expert conference«. In accordance with the Guidelines on CPESSEC, the meetings are held twice a year and other states may initiate a meeting on a topic, if necessary.

Although there are no differences in agen-

da setting, different contributions are made to regional meetings.[96] Within SSCSSR, Montenegro contributed to the drafting of the Budva Declaration.[97] The text of the Declaration was first agreed in Turkey and later adopted in Budva, in October 2010. As for bilateral activities, »the Ministry of Labour and Social Care initiated a meeting with the delegation of Bosnia and Herzegovina because of problems in the implementation of the Agreement on Social Security between the two countries. As this meeting opened up more controversial issues, a second meeting on the same topic was held in Sarajevo on 16–17 February 2010, organized by the Council of Europe.«

Probably the most visible impact of membership in the regional Health Network is the recent kidney transplant in Podgorica. The transplant was performed by Croatian experts from the Clinical Hospital Centre »Rebro«, in cooperation with Montenegrin doctors. The importance of this outreach for Montenegrin health care is probably best illustrated by a statement of the Health Minister of Montenegro, who said that »this event will be written in golden letters in the history of Montenegrin health care«. As for other benefits that Montenegro has obtained from the SSCSSR programme, one should mention legal analysis, studies and publications on the coordination of social security systems and other areas, which were highlighted by the participating countries as priorities. For example, SEEHN comprises 10 countries that are also members of the World Health Organization. Its health policy is in line with the global health policy, so that important documents, analyses, studies and publications are considered when creating a health policy in Montenegro. It is important to note that »Health in all policies« and »Health 2020« are two basic documents that

refer to a multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral approach to the design and implementation of health policies.

Decision making in Montenegro is regulated by national law and is also applicable to the regional initiatives we monitored. Hence, decisions regarding regional initiatives are made by the relevant ministries and agencies and high level officials. Their implementation is conducted by various stakeholders, depending on the topic and complexity of the decision. It is usually delegated from top management to lower ranking officials, but it is mostly done by national coordinators and their assistants. »Decisions regarding CPESSEC are made at the level of management of the Agency and within the programme documents of the Ministry of Labour and Social Care, namely the government«. In terms of implementation, »it depends on the type of decision – for implementation there is an established line of hierarchy. In the case of the Agency, the largest number of actions/decisions is implemented at the level of labour and employment offices«.

Decision-making at the national level is mainly top-down, but one should bear in mind one important fact: information and initiatives come from the officials responsible for everyday work on regional cooperation. Also, it is important to add that the global financial crisis, which has not left the states of the region untouched, makes self-initiated national activities almost impossible.

Gender Equality

The issue of gender equality is a separate and very important component of regional cooperation. What is commendable, when we speak of Montenegro, is the fact that a large number of women are involved in the work of regional initiatives, not only at the lower levels, as in the case of ministries, but in for-

---

96   These are not financial, but material contributions.
97   The Declaration was signed by the Minister of Labour and Social Care.

mal decision-making processes.[98] Given this fact, there was no need for promotional activities and consideration of inclusion of more women.

The national coordinators of MARRI and RAI are women. For example, one member of the SELEC Council, the supreme body made up of senior representatives of member states, who make decisions and lay down guidelines for working in all areas of this regional organization, is a woman. On the other hand, operational activities are run by males. Women responsible for these regional initiatives also occupy high managerial positions in their regular workplaces. The RAI representative, for instance, is director of the Directorate for the Anticorruption Initiative and she has also been a chairperson of this regional body. The SELEC representative is Head of the Department of International Relations and European Integration in the Police Directorate of Montenegro. Leaders and managers in various authorities participating in MARRI activities are also women.

Specifically regarding CPESSEC and in addition to managing the initiative, the »Employment Agency of Montenegro demonstrated a positive example in the employment of women«, starting from the top of the organization, headed by a woman and two female assistant directors (along with three assistants), to the lower levels of the Department. »Our colleague is a member of the management team for implementation of the UN-WOMEN's project.«[99] A series of seminars

implemented within the project were held at the Agency, both in the Central Service and in all regional offices of the Agency.

The heads of the ministries of health and labour and social welfare, which are primarily in charge of SEEHN and SSCSSR, were not women, but a number of deputies were. Unfortunately, this has to do with the fact that the percentage of women in the highest positions in state institutions is not satisfactory, in either the executive or the legislative branch (for example, in the previous government only two ministers were women, and only 11 per cent of MPs in the Assembly were women), and the situation is not better at the local level.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The government of Montenegro has embraced regional cooperation as one of its priorities, seeing it as a process which is of multiple importance for the country. Although mainly externally driven at the beginning, now it seems to have both political and technical support. Having a common history and heritage, fighting the same problems, coping with the same challenges and having set similar goals, such as joining the EU, the countries of the region are beginning to understand the importance of mutual cooperation and to get beyond past disagreements.

The first steps in this regard were memberships of different regional initiatives. However, we found during this research that membership of these initiatives often remains merely political. Different issues seem to be imposed by the political interests of each country. One of the most obvious cases of this is the issue

98   Within SSCSSR, the activities have been led by women, both as members of the Board and in the capacity of deputy. The same applies to the SEEHN initiative, where the national coordinator and its replacement are women. As for CPESSEC, the director of the Department of Employment, as well as contact persons are also women.

99   It is a project "Improving the economic and social rights of women in Montenegro", carried out by the United Nations Agency for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), in cooperation with Montenegrin institutions and civil society. The project objective is to contribute

to the eradication of gender-based discrimination in the labour market and the workplace, and the integration of a gender perspective in policy development, service delivery and budget processes, in order to ensure equal economic and social rights for women.

of Kosovo's membership in only the Regional Programme on Social Security Coordination and Social Security Reforms in South-East Europe (RP-SSCSSR), which is more a European than a regional initiative, since it was run by the European Commission and the Council of Europe.

Although it is hard to measure the impact of regional initiatives on regional cooperation on the ground, as well as with regard to the improvement of citizens' lives, one can conclude that Montenegro has shown insufficient interest in making use of all the possibilities these initiatives present.

Membership of these programmes has not led to any significant changes in administrative or technical capacities in Montenegro. Staff responsible for coordinating and implementing these initiatives are mainly seconded. Having a fairly tight schedule and trying to cope with regular assignments, national coordinators and their assistants seem to have little time to deal with tasks arising under these initiatives.

National consultations are mainly organised on a one-off basis and without a long-term and sustainable strategy. There is limited interest on the part of national authorities other than those directly responsible for implementation.

Civil society organisations are rarely involved in agenda setting or implementation.

The persons dealing with these initiatives often come and go and this causes an evident gap in the transfer of specific knowledge and experiences obtained during involvement in regional programmes.

Finally and most important, there is a lack of visibility with regard to the initiatives, as well as of success stories.

There are many challenges that need to be addressed if these initiatives are to be implemented properly.

- Visibility of national activities in regional initiatives and programmes is limited. The Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Health, the Department of Employment, the Directorate for the Anti-Corruption Initiative and other relevant institutions, especially national coordinators, should pay more attention to this issue in order to educate citizens about the importance and all the benefits of regional cooperation in the field of rule of law and social development.

- The involvement of NGOs in the work of regional initiatives varies, but generally is at a very low level. As a bridge between the demands of citizens and government policies, the increasing involvement of NGOs contributes to democratic development and implementation of political, economic and social reforms.

- Professional, administrative and technical capacities are satisfactory. What is a particular challenge in some cases is the »discontinuity« of knowledge transfer, given that, in some cases, the officials in charge of coordinating the national activities begin their work without any help from their predecessors.

- Gender equality represents a bright spot, given the high percentage of women involved in the work of regional initiatives. This practice should be continued and the government should increase the number of women in decision-making positions.

References

Boljević, T. (2012), First kidney transplant in the Clinical Centre of Montenegro successfully performed, Pobjeda 26 (September), available at: http://www.pobjeda.me/2012/09/26/u-kc-uspjesno-obavljena-prva-transplantacija-bubrega-u-crnoj-gori/

Central Bank of Montenegro, International Monetary Fund, available at: http://www.cb-mn.org/index.php?mn1=o_nama&mn2=medunarodna_saradnja&mn3=medunarodni_monetarni_fond

Central Bank of Montenegro, World Bank, available at: http://www.cb-mn.org/index.php?mn1=o_nama&mn2=medunarodna_saradnja&mn3=svjetska_banka

Centre of Public Employment Services of Southeast European Countries, www.cpessec.org

CPESSEC (2006), Partnership Protocol on establishment of The Centre of Public Employment Services of Southeast European Countries.

Convention of the Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre, Bucharest, available at: http://www.selec.org/docs/PDF/SELEC%20Convention%20%5Bsigned%20on%20 09.12.2009%5D.pdf

Dubrovnik Pledge (2001), Dubrovnik, available at: http://www.seehnsec.blogspot.com/p/dubrovnik-pledge.html

Koneska, C. (2008), Regional identity: The missing element in Western Balkans security cooperation, Central and Eastern European Online Library.

Law on Asylum (2006), Podgorica: Official Gazette of Montenegro 36/06.

Law on Police (2005), Podgorica: Official Gazette of Montenegro 28/2005.

MARRI (2004), Memorandum of Understanding: Establishment of the Regional Forum of the Migration, Asylum and Refugees Return Initiative, available at: http://www.marri-rc.org/upload/Documents/MARRI%20Main%20Documents/MoU%20on%20Establishment%20of%20MARRI%20Regional%20Forum%20-%202%20July%202004.pdf

MARRI (2010), Strategy and Action Plan 2011– 2013, Skopje.

Ministry of Defence of Montenegro (n.d.), NATO Summit in Chicago, available at: http://www.mod.gov.me/en/news/114067/NATO-Summit-in-Chicago.html

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration (n.d.), Foreign Policy Priorities of Montenegro, available at: http://www.mip.gov.me/index.php/Ministarstvo/spoljno-politiki-prioriteti-crne-gore.html

Ordinance on Police Representatives (2009), Podgorica: Official Gazette of Montenegro 25/09.

Radio Slobodna Evropa (n.d.), Nezaobilazan stav SAD u kreiranju crnogorske spoljne politike (Inevitable U.S. position in the creation of the Montenegrin foreign policy), available at: http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/content/nezaobilazan_stav_sad_u_kreiranju_crnogorske_spoljne_politike/24570458.html

RAI (2007), Memorandum of Understanding concerning Cooperation in Fighting Corruption through the South Eastern European Anti-Corruption Initiative, Zagreb, available at: http://www.rai-see.org/images/doc/32/Memorandum%20of%20understanding.pdf

RAI (n.d.), Conclusion and Decisions of the 11th SPAI Steering Group Meeting, Podgorica, available at: http://www.rai-see.org/images/doc/32/Conclusions%20and%20Decisions%20of%2011th%20Steering%20Group %20meeting.pdf

Regional Cooperation for Public Health (2010), The South Eastern Europe Health Network: the past, the present and the future, available at: http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/124909/Regionalcoop.pdf

SECI (1996), Statement of Purpose for the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative, Geneva.

SEEHN (n.d.), Memorandum of Understanding on the Future of the South-Eastern Europe Health Network in the Framework of the South East European Co-operation Process, available at: http://www.seehnsec.blogspot.com/p/memorandum-of-understanding-2009.html

Southeast European Cooperative Initiative / Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre, www.secicenter.org

South-Eastern Europe Health Network, www.seehnsec.blogspot.com

Interviews

Business assistant at the Employment Agency, 24 November 2012.

Montenegro state official at MARRI Headquarters, 26 November 2012.

Two officials from the Ministry of Health, Department for EU Integration and International Relations, 22 November 2012.

Official from the Police Directorate, Department for International Relations and EU Integration, 30 November 2012.

Official from the National Central Bureau of Interpol, 30 November 2012.

Two officials from the Directorate for the Anti-corruption Initiative, 21 November 2012.

Official from the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, 22 November 2012.

Monitoring Regional Cooperation in South East Europe:

The Republic of Serbia

Filip Ejdus

1. Background Information

The watershed event in Serbia's recent history took place on 5 October 2000, when President Slobodan Milošević was toppled by mass demonstrations. Serbia has been undergoing a triple transition ever since: from authoritarian regime to democracy, from conflict to peace and from isolation to integration. The key external driving force behind this multifaceted transformation is the process of EU integration. The prospect of membership, followed by a strong EU conditionality policy, has provided Serbia with an important incentive for reforms, including regional cooperation. From the very beginning of the Stabilization and Association Process in 2000, regional cooperation was set by Brussels as one of the key conditions for progress in Western Balkan countries' EU integration, in addition to the well-known Copenhagen Criteria and cooperation with ICTY.

Serbia signed the Stabilization and Association Agreement in November 2007 and officially applied for EU membership in December 2009. In March 2012, Serbia was granted candidate status for EU membership. Consequently, the unresolved dispute over Kosovo emerged as the last major impediment both for Serbia's EU progress and for regional cooperation. Serbia does not recognize the unilateral declaration of independence issued by the Kosovan authorities on 17 February 2008 and treats it as an illegal act of secession. In contrast, all the other countries of the region,

except for Bosnia and Herzegovina, have recognized the independence of Kosovo and have established diplomatic relationships with it. In the latest Progress Report published in 2012, the European Commission took note of Serbia's active and constructive involvement in regional cooperation schemes. The key reason for such an encouraging message was the agreement between Belgrade and Pristina on the representation of Kosovo in regional forums, reached in February 2012. However, as the Commission report notes: »the agreement reached on regional cooperation and the representation of Kosovo in the framework of the Belgrade/Pristina dialogue did not immediately result in either smoother or fully inclusive regional cooperation« (European Commission 2012: 20).

The political system in Serbia is a semi-presidential parliamentary democracy. This entails the co-existence of two powerful executive branches, a directly elected president and a prime minister elected by the parliament (Pejić 2007). When a president of Serbia is a leader of a parliamentary majority, his effective powers increase significantly. In contrast, in case of co-habitation, when a president does not have the support of a parliamentary majority, his effective authority diminishes significantly (Pavlović and Stanojević 2010). Parliamentary elections have been held five times in Serbia since the democratic transition started, in 2000, 2003, 2007, 2008 and 2012. Throughout this period, one of the key trends was the gradual return of parties from

the Milošević era back into the government, a process that came to its full conclusion after the last elections in 2012. Although their political rhetoric at times threatened to undermine regional cooperation, so far this has not happened. Moreover, despite concerns that the return of parties of the old regime may affect Serbia's European orientation, its foreign policy has remained quite stable, for good or ill. In addition to seeking EU membership and protecting fictional sovereignty over Kosovo, the main priorities of Serbia's foreign policy remain regional cooperation, military neutrality, strategic partnership with the Russian Federation and good relations with the United States.

Serbia has important economic, political, security and cultural incentives to advance regional cooperation. Economically, South East European countries are very important commercial partners for Serbia, second only to the EU. Around one-third of Serbia's exports go to the region, being a rare case of a Serbian foreign trade surplus. Serbia benefited immensely from CEFTA, a regional free trade agreement signed by all Western Balkan states plus Moldova. Serbia also has very strong political incentives to strengthen regional cooperation. First and foremost, as already mentioned, Brussels made it part and parcel of the EU integration process. The Serbia 2012 Progress Report published by the European Commission stated this clearly: »Regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations form an essential part of the process of Serbia's moving towards the European Union« (EC 2012: 20). Unsurprisingly, most regional cooperation schemes were initiated, supported and supervised by the EU and its member states. On Serbia's side, regional cooperation is part of the wider discourse on European integration. An institutional reflection of this is the fact that, within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Regional Initiatives Department belongs to the EU sector and not to the Multilateral Cooperation Sector. The Department coordinates Serbia's participation in all regional initiatives, most of which are taking place in South East Europe.

Regional cooperation also underpins the process of regional reconciliation and stabilization. Serbia can more easily manage its challenges of democratic transition and regional peace building through participation in the 40 or so regional initiatives that cover a vast array of sectors. As the biggest state in the region, having major political stakes in both Bosnia and Kosovo, Serbia is highly sensitive to any potential instability in South East Europe. In addition, soft security threats undermining Serbia's political stability, such as organized crime, usually have a regional outlook and can be tackled only through regionally coordinated policies. Finally, Serbia has a cultural incentive to maintain and advance regional cooperation, not least because a sizeable Serb diaspora lives in neighbouring countries. Unlike some other Western Balkan states, stronger ties with the neighbourhood are not perceived by Serbian citizens in a negative fashion, as a revamp of Yugoslavia or anything like that. In sum, it is clear that Serbia has strong external and internal incentives to advance regional cooperation.

2. Analysis of the Initiatives

The aim of this section is to analyse how regional cooperation schemes in the fields of justice and home affairs and social development work in practice at national level in the Republic of Serbia. In the field of justice and home affairs, Serbia participates in all three analysed initiatives: SELEC, MARRI and RAI. It was among the 12 countries that founded SECI by signing the Agreement on Cooperation to Prevent and Combat Cross-Border

Crime in May 1999. When SECI was transformed into SELEC, Serbia was again among the 13 founding members who signed the Convention of the Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre (SELEC) on 9 December 2009 in Bucharest. Moreover, Serbia signed the Protocol on Privileges and Immunities in November 2010 and is represented in the SELEC Centre in Bucharest by two liaison officers, one from the Customs Authority and the other from the Serbian Police. Moreover, Serbia has also been a member of the Migration, Asylum, and Refugees Regional Initiative (MARRI) since it was established in 2003. At the meeting held in Herceg Novi on 5 April 2004, member states, including Serbia, signed the Joint Statement which established the MARRI Regional Centre in Skopje. In addition to the Regional Centre, MARRI has a Regional Forum which is a political body providing strategic guidance to the organization. The Chairmanship of the Regional Forum rotates once a year. Serbia held the Chairmanship from April 2011 to April 2012. Priorities during Serbia's chairmanship were the fight against human trafficking and legal and illegal migration. The chairmanship, generally considered successful, concluded with the adoption of the Belgrade Declaration on 3 April 2012 in a meeting held in the capital of Serbia.

Moreover, Serbia participates in regional cooperation schemes in the fight against corruption. When the Stability Pact Anti-Corruption Initiative (SPAI) was established in February 2000, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) did not participate due to international sanctions imposed on the regime of Slobodan Milošević. The FRY joined the Stability Pact on 26 October 2000, weeks after Milošević was ousted from power. Ever since, Serbia has participated in SPAI, which changed its name to the Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative (RAI) on 9 October 2007. Officially, Serbia joined RAI on 18 May 2010 when the MOU was signed and subsequently ratified.

Serbia has been equally active in the three analysed initiatives in the field of social development. First, it took part in the Regional Programme on Social Security Coordination and Social Security Reforms in South East Europe (RP-SSCSSR), which was a joint programme of the European Commission and the Council of Europe. The programme started as a follow up of the Social Institution Support Programme (SISP), which was implemented between 2004 and 2008. RP-SSCSSR started in March 2008 and lasted until August 2011. Second, Serbia has been an active member within the Centre of Public Employment Services of South East Europe (CPESSEC) since its inception when the Partnership Protocol was signed in Sofia in 2006. Its second key document, the Guidelines for Operation, was signed at the conference held in Belgrade in 2007. Serbia presided over the CPESSEC in 2007 and 2008, a period which was crucial for the development of this initiative. Serbia's National Employment Service (NES) maintains the initiative's website.

Third, Serbia has been actively involved in the South-eastern Europe Health Network (SEEHN), which is considered to be one of the most successful regional initiatives in South East Europe. Serbia has been taking part in it ever since health was added to the agenda of the Social Cohesion Initiative within the Working Table 2 (Economic Reconstruction, Cooperation, and Development) of the Stability Pact. The FRY was among seven states that signed the Dubrovnik Pledge on 2 September 2001, thus establishing the SEEHN. The FRY, and then Serbia as its successor state, was a signatory of all further documents, including the Skopje Pledge (2005), the MOU on the Future of the South-Eastern Europe Health Network within the Framework of the South East European Cooperation Process (2008) and the Banja Luka Pledge (2011).

What follows is the analysis of how these six regional initiatives work in practice at the national level in the Republic of Serbia, in terms of three dimensions: *implementation*, *local ownership* and *gender*. In addition to the analysis of primary and secondary sources related to Serbia's involvement in the aforementioned six regional cooperation schemes, 13 semi-structured interviews were conducted with state representatives and independent experts in the fall and winter of 2012. The interviewees included representatives of the Ministry of Interior (MOI), the Ministry of Health (MOH), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund, the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), the National Employment Service (NES), the European Movement in Serbia and the Belgrade Centre for Security Policy.

2.1 Implementation

This section will assess the implementation or the existence of structures and capacities within Serbia to sustain the regional initiatives under examination. This dimension will be analysed through four indicators: *legislation*, *administrative structures*, *technical infrastructure* and *practices/procedures*.

(i) With regard to *legislation*, a variety of normative documents have been adopted for the purpose of the six initiatives analysed. In the field of justice and home affairs, according to the interviewees, the normative framework for regional cooperation in the three initiatives (SELEC, MARRI and RAI) has by and large been put in place. The Serbian Parliament adopted the Law on Confirmation of the Convention of Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre on 18 October 2011. Up until recently, the status of police attachés was underregulated and they had to be detached by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and accredited through the host embassies. This

problem was solved when the Law on the Police was amended in October 2011 in order to regulate international police cooperation, including SELEC (Đorđević 2011). According to the interviewees from CSOs, the procedure of selecting liaison officers is still not properly regulated and is subject to voluntarism and political influence. Serbia has also adopted all the laws necessary for regional cooperation in the field of asylum, refugees and migration, most importantly the Law on Protection of State Border (2008) and the Law on Asylum (2008). The latter meets the standards set by international documents regarding the right of asylum, such as the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951), as well as the European Convention on Human Rights (1950) and its protocols. Moreover, Serbia signed the MOU in the area of consular assistance and consular protection in June 2010, which was negotiated within the framework of MARRI. Based on this document, bilateral agreements were signed with Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina. In addition, Serbia proposed an MOU on data exchange concerning asylum seekers at the Regional Forum held in Montenegro in May 2010. Unfortunately, the conditions were not met for signing to take place during Serbia's presidency because other member states are still considering its implications for their private data protection regimes. The interviewees from Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of the Interior expressed the hope that the document will be adopted during the current Bosnian chairmanship. Finally, Serbia's normative framework for the implementation of RAI is complete. Currently, consultations about the changes to the current MOU are under way and the new document was expected to be signed in January 2013.

In addition to the aforementioned laws, Serbia has also adopted a number of strategic documents, which envisage regional coopera-

tion in the field of justice and home affairs. On the most general level, first and foremost comes the Ministry of the Interior Development Strategy 2011–2016, adopted in December 2010. The strategy stipulates the following: »It is necessary to create indispensable legal, institutional, financial and human resources that will enable the most efficient development of regional police cooperation« (MUP 2010: 19–20). Additionally, the Republic of Serbia has adopted a number of sector-specific strategies tackling SELEC, MARRI or RAI indirectly. This is the case, for example, with the National Strategy for the Fight against Organized Crime (2009), the Strategy for Migration Management (2009) and the National Strategy for the Fight against Corruption (2005). All these documents stress the importance of regional cooperation, although they do not explicitly mention the three initiatives.

The normative framework needed for implementation of the three initiatives in the field of social development is also mostly in place. In the field of public employment bilateral agreements between Serbia and neighbouring countries have been signed and protocols and models for data exchange – for example, on length of service – as well as necessary procedures for the employment of foreign workers were adopted. With regard to SEEHN, Serbia signed the Host Agreement for the new Secretariat to be established in Skopje but has yet to ratify it. In addition, Serbia has adopted all the necessary regulations for the establishment of the Regional Health Development Centre on Accreditation and Continuous Quality Improvement of Health Care.

In the wake of the Third Ministerial Conference on Social Security Coordination in the South East European Region, held in Budva on 12 October 2010, the government of Serbia adopted Decision 5, No: 037-7439/2010 on

11 October 2011. The decision determined the negotiating platform of the Serbian delegation at the ministerial conference (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy 2011: 6). It was decided that due to the plan for Kosovo to sign the final declaration, Serbia's delegation would be represented at the expert level. The platform specifically insisted that the Kosovo's participation at the Ministerial Conference needed to be in line with UNSCR 1244 and it defined the substance of the letter which Minister of Labour and Social Policy Rasim Ljajić sent to Alexander Vladychenko, Director General of Social Cohesion (DG3) of the Council of Europe. The letter by which Serbia accepted the terms of the Budva Declaration was attached as an annex to it.

The Republic of Serbia has also adopted a number of sector-specific strategies in the field of social development, such as the National Employment Strategy 2011–2020 (2011), the National Strategy of Social Protection (2005) and a set of health policy strategies. All these strategies emphasize the importance of regional cooperation, but do not mention the three analysed initiatives explicitly.

(ii) Concerning *administrative structures*, almost no new bodies have been created for the purpose of the six analysed regional initiatives. The only exception is the establishment of the Regional Health Development Centre (RHDC) in Belgrade as part of the Agency for Accreditation of Health Care Institutions in Serbia, in October 2012. Various cross-sector expert groups in MARRI or task forces within SELEC were formed in order to support the implementation of the initiatives, especially during the periods when Serbia held the presidency. However, in the past decade or so, a number of new bodies have been created for the purpose of regional integration more generally. Thus, for instance, several bodies were created or modified within the Ministry of the

Interior to serve the purpose of regional police cooperation, such as the Bureau for International Cooperation and European Integration (2003) and the Directorate for International Operational Police Cooperation (2010). The latter has four bureaus dealing with EUROPOL, INTERPOL, information management and other forms of international cooperation (including SELEC and MARRI). Finally, Serbia has not established any new bodies at the national level for the purpose of implementation of RAI. According to Lopandić and Kronja, Serbia's participation in SPAI led to the adoption of national anti-corruption strategies and the establishment of the Anti-Corruption Council in 2001 (Lopandić and Kronja 2010: 92).

No new staff has been employed to be in charge of the analysed regional initiatives. Instead, staff engaged in the implementation of the initiatives was recruited from existing employees. Most people involved in regional cooperation spend only a fraction of their working hours on the analysed regional initiatives. Within the Ministry of the Interior, there are posts related to international cooperation but not specifically for particular regional initiatives. Approximately 60 people work on regional police cooperation, of whom 20 work within the Bureau for International Cooperation and European Integration and around 40 in the Directorate for International Operative Police Cooperation. In both organizational units, SELEC and MARRI are relatively marginal. The Bureau handles practically the entire fundraising for the Ministry of the Interior, as well as cooperation with international organisations and civil society organisations. Similarly, the Directorate pays much more attention to the cooperation with INTERPOL and EUROPOL than with SELEC. This is because the number of requests coming through the former is much higher. The Ministry of the Interior currently has five police attachés, in Skopje (MARRI) and Bucharest (SELEC), Mos-

cow, Ljubljana (DCAF) and Washington. Both the National Coordinator for MARRI and the Focal Point for SELEC are high-ranking functionaries within the Ministry of the Interior: the former is the Deputy Head of the Border Police Directorate and the latter is the Head of the Directorate for International Operative Police Cooperation. For the purpose of RAI implementation, the Special Advisor at the Ministry of Justice is currently serving as Senior Representative at the Steering Committee. His deputy has not yet been appointed.

The NES, too, has not employed new staff for the purpose of regional initiatives. Its Centre for International Cooperation, which is responsible for the CPESSEC, employs only three people who at the same time deal with all other forms of international cooperation. Equally, no new people were hired in the health sector for the purpose of SEEHN. »Focal points« for regional cooperation are appointed within different health institutes on a merit basis and among already employed personnel. The National Health Coordinator to SEEHN is usually a State Secretary appointed by the Minister of Health. Finally, no new staff have been hired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the purpose of the six regional initiatives. The European Union Sector employs around 30 diplomats, eight of them working in the Regional Initiatives Department. The problem within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the fact that diplomats remain in one position for only eighteen months, on average. The quick turnover prevents specialization, which is very important in the field of regional cooperation, which can be very technical and complex.

There has been no specific training for either of the initiatives and, according to the interviewees, there is no need for it. Police officers are trained in regional cooperation either at the Serbia's Police Academy, the Marshall Centre (Germany), the Regional School of

Public Administration (Montenegro) or the International Law Enforcement Academy (Hungary). At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the staff dealing with regional cooperation did not have specific training for the analysed initiatives. They acquired the necessary knowledge from their senior colleagues, through »learning by doing«, at the Diplomatic Academy or from numerous EU integration seminars organized by various educational institutions by default encompassing a regional cooperation component.

Representatives from the Ministry of Health complained that there is practically no in-house training at all in the field of health diplomacy and little awareness that such a thing even exists within other institutions of higher education. Finally, there has been no specific training for the purpose of RAI, except periodic summer schools attended – so far – by a handful of bureaucrats from various institutions. The sole exception in this regard was the RP-SSCSSR that has devoted a great deal of effort to training employees dealing with social security. During the project, 102 participants from Serbia took part in different educational activities organized under the auspices of the initiative (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy 2011: 3).

(iii) *Technical infrastructure* obtained for the purpose of the six analysed regional initiatives encompassed mostly computers. No new building or vehicles were purchased. The RHDC was established within the Agency for Accreditation. The latter institution did not purchase any new equipment or hire any new staff for the purpose of the initiative. However, the establishment of the RHDC increased the relevance of the Agency and helped to ensure its survival in the face of the new government's plans to shut down all »irrelevant agencies«. For the purpose of the CPESSEC, a website was developed as an in-kind contri-

bution of the NES. The only cost that the NES incurred regarding the website was to pay for the domain and hosting. Within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, computers were donated by the European Commission to the EU Sector but only because it dealt with the EU, not because of the Regional Initiatives Department, let alone the six analysed initiatives.

(iv) *Practices and procedures* for implementation vary across initiatives. Within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is an umbrella institution for all regional cooperation, only ad hoc cross-sector meetings take place, usually once or twice a month. During periods when Serbia holds a presidency, the meetings are held on a more regular basis. Otherwise, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is involved in the six analysed regional cooperation schemes only when it is asked to do so. This is usually the case if a political issue is on their agenda, such as the following: participation of Kosovo's representative in initiatives; election of high functionaries within the Secretariat; appointment of national representatives to secretariats; and adoption or amendment of important documents. One of the reasons why this horizontal coordination is weak is, as one interviewee put it, the »feudalization« of the government.

The Deputy Minister in charge of the European Union usually initiates the meetings. Civil society organisations are rarely invited to such meetings, however, only when Serbia holds presidency over some of the initiatives and when the frequency of activities is higher. Within the Ministry of the Interior, there are day-to-day meetings within either the Bureau for International Cooperation and European Integration or the Directorate for International Operational Police Cooperation. In addition, the Bureau organizes a annual conference, often dealing with regional police cooperation. For example in 2011, the annual conference

was about MARRI. Civil society organisations are sometimes consulted on an ad hoc basis when issues of human trafficking, asylum or migration are on the agenda.

As far as RP-SSCCCR is concerned, the only meetings that have taken place at the national level were ones at which the local programme officer alone or in concert with the international management of the programme informed other national institutions about the activities undertaken or planned within the initiative. In addition, the key activities of the initiative were seminars, trainings, and conferences, summer schools and »speaking days«. The last one is an arranged meeting between delegations of Serbia and Croatia represented by experts and officials from the health and pension insurance area, on one side, and registered clients who have pending cases concerning social security rights, on the other. Although the RP-SSCSSR officially ended in August 2011, the »Speaking Days« meetings between Serbia and Croatia, which are considered to be of high value, continue unabated. These »Speaking Days« meetings take place twice a year, once in Belgrade and once in Zagreb, at the cost of the host country. Although RP-SSCSSR was an initiative directed at state institutions only, its local programme officer attempted to involve civil society organisations, too. However, only media representatives responded positively. Universities and trade unions showed little or no interest in taking part. The CPESSEC also has had very limited consultation with civil society organisations in Serbia and only on ad hoc basis. More specifically, CSO experts were invited as lecturers when the issue of migration was on the agenda. Finally, practices and procedures in SEEHN do not involve any official or regular meetings at the national level. Focal points at different health institutions cooperate directly with their opposite numbers in the region. Only periodically do they send

their reports to the local secretary of the national coordinator. As with all other initiatives, consultations with civil society organisations are very rare.

2.2 Local Ownership

Local ownership is defined in terms of the capacities and performance of Serbia's institutions within regional initiatives. It will be analysed through three indicators: *resources*, *agenda setting* and the *eagerness* of the Serbian state.

(i) The amount of financial *resources* that Serbia contributes to the six studied regional initiatives varies. Some initiatives do not cost anything, such as RP-SSCSSR, in relation to which the European Commission and the Council of Europe covered all costs. In other initiatives, such as CPESSEC, membership involved a financial cost only when Serbia held the presidency. According to interviewees, the annual amount contributed to CPESSEC during the presidency was roughly 30,000 euros paid from the budget of the Ministry of the Economy and Regional Development. This covered the organization of two expert conferences (approximately 5,000 euros each) and two directors' conferences (about 10,000 euros each). The only cost that Serbia incurs in this initiative, beyond the Presidency period, is 300 euros needed for annual maintenance of the website. Serbia also pays around 50,000 euros from the Budget of the Ministry of Health for its participation in SEEHN. This covers the contribution for the SEEHN Secretariat, which is set at 20,000 euros for Serbia, in accordance with its GDP, under the MOU. In addition, Serbia annually contributes an additional 20,000 euros for the maintenance of the RHDC and 10,000 euros for travel expenses earmarked for activities within the network. Serbia's financial contribution to MARRI is 20,000 euros. The

Secretariat pays travel and accommodation costs for the national coordinator to attend regional meetings. Travel costs of other state representatives are paid by the Ministry of the Interior and do not exceed 3,000 euros per year. Serbia's annual contribution to SELEC is 45,000 euros. The fixed fee that all members of RAI, including Serbia, are supposed to pay is 24,000 euros. However, Serbia has not paid its fee since it joined the initiative in 2010. According to the Senior Representative, the reason for this is the implementation of austerity measures, but also the failure of the Ministry of Justice to communicate the need to the Ministry of Finance. All travel expenses of the Senior Representative are paid by RAI.

(ii) *Agenda setting* depends largely on the nature of the issue at hand. According to most interviewees, ministers, their advisors or state secretaries decide what political issues will be discussed at national meetings. If an issue is of a high-political nature, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or even the government puts it on the agenda. More technical issues are left to focal points and national coordinators, however. Within initiatives in which high-ranking decision-makers – for example, SELEC, MARRI – act as focal points and national coordinators they often participate in political decision making as well. For instance, national coordinators in MARRI participated only in the work of the Regional Forum until 2011. They have recently been included in the work of the Regional Committee, which was previously reserved for representatives of their respective Ministries of Foreign Affairs. A similar division of labour exists when it comes to regional meetings.

In-house meetings devoted specifically to any of the initiatives are extremely rare. Horizontal meetings are organized on an ad hoc basis because most day-to-day coordination can be arranged via telephone or e-mail.

Both in-house and horizontal meetings are much more regular when Serbia holds the presidency of an initiative. Most interviewees complained that stronger, more regular and institutionalized coordination between various ministries is desirable. Civil society organisations are also left out of the agenda-setting process in the analysed initiatives. The interviewees usually explain this by referring to the »nature of the field«. The sole exception is human trafficking, illegal migration and asylum seekers where civil society organisations such as ASTRA or Group 484 are sometimes consulted.

(iii) *Eagerness of the state* to implement obligations derived from regional cooperation schemes to a large extent depends on the area of cooperation. Whereas the highest-ranking state officials show a strong determination to take regional cooperation in the field of justice and home affairs seriously, this is not so much the case with regard to social development. Interlocutors dealing with MARRI and SELEC did not complain about the lack of eagerness of the highest-level decision-makers to get involved in the process. For example, Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior Ivica Dačić takes part in practically all meetings of the Regional Forum of MARRI. However, the state does not seem to have much eagerness to be involved in RAI and its failure to pay the fee is a clear illustration of this. The reason is the perceived marginality and passivity of the initiative. On a more general level, one interviewee talked about the lack of eagerness among the highest political authorities within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the past to accept bottom-up ideas from the staff dealing with regional initiatives. In contrast, all interlocutors involved in the implementation of social development initiatives (RP SSCSSR, CPESSEC, SEEHN) noticed a lack of sustained and informed interest at

the highest levels of government for regional cooperation schemes.

At the national level, staff dealing closely with the initiatives have daily communication. Official meetings are usually initiated by the head of a sector or national coordinator but not on a regular basis; only when a specific need arises. At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Deputy Minister for EU Integration initiates meetings on a wider topic of regional cooperation every two weeks or at least once a month. Within the Ministry of the Interior, meetings are usually not initiated specifically with regard to SELEC or MARRI on a regular basis. Meetings regarding the three social development initiatives are rare, too, since most day-to-day issues can be arranged via telephone or e-mail.

(iv) *Decision-making procedures* depend on the nature of the issue. If the decision is purely technical and operational, it is made by the focal point, national coordinator or anyone else who is operationally involved. The more political an issue is, the more involved the minister's office or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs becomes. On rare occasions, usually with regard to the issue of Kosovo participation or adoption of new documents, even the government or the Office of the Prime Minister is involved.

All interlocutors pointed out that the most important political decisions are decided at the ministerial level. More precisely, the decisions are made at the level of ministerial offices, often by minister's chiefs of staff or advisors. If a decision has anything to do with Kosovo, candidacies for secretariat functionaries, voting at important regional meetings (for example, the Regional Committee of MARRI) or adoption of new regional documents, the key decision-making authority is the cabinet of the Foreign Minister or even the government. During Vuk Jeremić's time as Minister of For-

eign Affairs (2007–2012) Serbia's foreign policy priority was the struggle against Kosovo's secession. As most interviewees confirmed, this was heavily reflected in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs's approach to regional cooperation. If decisions are political but fall outside the purview of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the highest authorities within other ministries or institutions responsible for the initiative make them (for example, the Director of NES for CPESSEC). Finally, if the decision is purely technical and operational, without any political strings attached, it is decided by the focal points of the regional cooperation schemes or anyone who is operationally involved.

2.3 Gender

For most interviewees gender representation is a non-issue. In practice, there is a reasonable amount of gender balance at the level of focal points for the analysed regional initiatives. Out of six focal points and national coordinators, women occupy three of them (SEEHN, CEEPSEC and MARRI). The Senior Representative of Serbia in RAI is a man, but his deputy has been a female in the past and will remain so in the future. According to one interviewee's estimates, within the Ministry of the Interior's Bureau for International Cooperation and European Integration around 70 per cent of staff are women. The gender ratio within the Directorate for International Operational Police Cooperation is approximately 60/40 in favour of women. The National Coordinator for MARRI is one of the highest ranking women in the Serbian police and currently serves as vice-president of Women Police Officers Network in South East Europe (WPON). Within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, interlocutors agreed that the balance has started to tip in favour of women. Some interviewees explain this increasing prevalence of women in regional initiatives by referring to the women's (assumed) superiority in terms of linguis-

tic capabilities; a second view is that salaries in regional cooperation are not very attractive for the most capable men; others argue that working on regional cooperation involves a lot of »office« work and men are said to be traditionally interested in »operational« work, especially in police and diplomacy.

According to interlocutors, there are no existing plans to involve more women in the implementation of regional initiatives at the national level. In any way, all those regional initiatives involve very small group of people at the national level and most interviewees assess that there is no need to pay too much attention to gender mainstreaming.

3. Conclusion and Recommendations

The normative framework for regional cooperation in the six analysed initiatives is, by and large, in place. Legislation is comprehensive and complete and there are no significant gaps. Very few novel structures or bodies have been established for the purpose of regional cooperation. The only exception is the RHDC in Belgrade. Although there is no specific training on the subject, staff knowledge and competence concerning regional cooperation seems to be sufficient. Public administration in Serbia is exposed to a large number of more general training opportunities in the field of European integration, which by default encompasses a regional cooperation component. Instead of recruiting new staff or forming new bodies for the purpose of the six analysed regional initiatives, existing structures were put to use. Although these pragmatic approaches have worked well so far, overall human resources devoted to regional cooperation schemes seem to be insufficient. As a result, there is very little capacity for horizontal coordination, while institutional memory is sparse. This could be ameliorated if more staff were assigned to work on regional

cooperation on a more permanent basis. Horizontal cooperation can be improved under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, provided there existed clearer foreign policy priorities for regional cooperation that go well beyond occasional chairmanship periods.

The eagerness of political decision-makers is stronger in justice and home affairs than in social development. In particular, more political capital could be invested in fostering regional cooperation in social security or public employment. A positive collateral effect of the lack of eagerness of political decision-makers could be seen in the field of health cooperation, where expert communities are more or less left to their own devices. Country specialization, which exists in SEEHN, for example, is an indicator of functional differentiation between countries of the region, increased mutual trust and a higher level of regional integration.

Civil society is rarely involved in agenda-setting or decision-making processes within the analysed regional initiatives at the national level. The only exception to this is migration and human trafficking, where civil society organisations are sometimes included. However, this does not necessarily imply that the state is closed to the CSO community, which is eager but unable to get on board. Very often, as the RP-SSCSSR case demonstrates, civil society organisations do not have the capacities or simply sufficient interest to get involved in regional policy issues that are often highly technical. Finally, in Serbia there is no particular gender mainstreaming policy in regional initiatives. Despite that, the gender composition of national staff dealing with the six initiatives is slightly in favour of women. Women are included at all levels of authority, including the highest positions.

Bibliography

European Commission (2012), Serbia 2012 Progress Report, 10 October, available at: http://www.seio.gov.rs/documents/eu-documents.231.html (16.12.2012).

Đorđević, Saša (2011), Razvijanje policijske diplomatije: uloga oficira za vezu, str.13-19 u Zbirka predloga praktične politike za reformu policije u Srbiji, Br. 5, July, available at: www.bezbednost.org/upload/document/peta_zbirka_pred_pol_reforma_policije.pdf (16.12.2012).

Lopandić, Duško and Kronja, Jasminka (2010), Regionalne inicijative i multilateralna saradnja na Balkanu, Beograd: Evropski pokret, available at: www.emins.org/sr/publikacije/knjige/10-reg-inic-balkan.pdf (16.12.2012).

MARRI (2004), The Herceg Novi Statement, available at: www.marri-rc.org/upload/Documents/MARRI%20Main%20Documents/Herceg%20Novi%20Joint%20Statement%20-%205%20April%202004.pdf (16.12.2012).

Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (2011), Izveštaj o učešću u programu Evropske komisije i Saveta Evrope, «Koordinacija socijalne sigurnosti i reforma sistema socijalne sigurnosti», u periodu od aprila 2008. do avgusta 2011. godine, Beograd, September.

MFA (n.d.), Organizational Structure of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, available at: http://www.mfa.gov.rs/en/about-the-ministry/organisational-structure (16.12.2012.).

MUP (2010), Strategy of Development of the Ministry of Interior 2011–2016, available at: http://www.mup.gov.rs/cms_cir/sadrzaj.nsf/Strategija%20razvoja%20MUP-a%202011-2016.pdf (16.12.2012)

Pavlović, Dušan and Stanojević, Ivan (2010), Predsednik Republike, institucionalni dizajn i politički feleri, str. 65-73, u Dušan Pavlović, Razvoj demokratskih ustanova u Srbiji – deset godina posle, Heinrich Böll Stiftung, Beograd.

Pejić, Irena (2007), Constitutional Design and Viability of Semi-Presidentialism in Serbia, LSE, Discussion Paper 43, Centre for the Study of Global Governance.

Republic of Serbia (n.d.), National Employment Strategy 2011–2020, available at: http://lokalnirazvoj.rs/nacionalna-strategija-zapo%C5%A1ljavanja-2011-2020.html (16.12.2012)

RP-SSCSSR (n.d.), The Budva Declaration, available at: http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/sscssr/source/Budva_dec.pdf (16.12.2012)

SEEHN, Memorandum of Understanding on the Future of the South-eastern Europe Health Network in the Framework of the South East European Co-operation Process, available at: http://www.euro.who.int/data/assets/pdf_file/0006/108663/SEE_MoU.pdf p.14 (16.12.2012).

SECI (n.d.), Agreement on Cooperation to prevent and Combat Cross-Border Crime, available at: http://www.secicenter.org/p160/Legal_framework_SECI_Agreement (16.12.2012).

Serbian Parliament (n.d.), Law on Confirmation of the Convention of Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre, available at: www.parlament.gov.rs/upload/archive/files/lat/pdf/zakoni/2011/2915-11Lat.zip (16.12.2012).

List of interviewees

Dinić, Aleksandar, Local Programme Officer for RP SSCSSR, Pension and Disability Insurance Fund, Republic of Serbia, date of interview: 17/12/2012.

Đorđević, Saša, Research Fellow, Belgrade Centre for Security Policy, date of interview: 26/10/2012.

Filipović, Snežana, Minister Counsellor, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Serbia date of interview: 19/12/2012

Ilić, Radomir. Special Advisor, Senior Representative at the RAI, Ministry of Justice, Republic of Serbia, date of interview: 21/12/2012.

Kronja, Jasna, European Movement, date of interview: 11/12/2012.

Lazić, Miodrag, Bureau for International Cooperation and European Integration, Ministry of the Interior, Republic of Serbia, date of interview: 30/10/2012.

Lopandić, Duško, Assistant Minister, Sector for the European Union, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Serbia, date of interview: 17/12/2012.

Sović, Nevena, Secretary for SEEHN, Ministry of Health, Republic of Serbia, date of interview: 17/11/2012.

Stojanović, Sonja, Director, Belgrade Centre for Security Policy, date of interview: 25/10/2012.

Sučević, Đurđica, Contact person for CPESSEC, International Cooperation Department, National Employment Service, Republic of Serbia, date of interview: 2/11/2012.

Uljanov, Sergej, Directorate for International Operative Police Cooperation, Ministry of Interior, Republic of Serbia, date of interview: 12/12/2012

Vasiljević, Jelena, National Coordinator for MARRI, Ministry of Interior, Republic of Serbia, date of interview: 20/12/2012

Vasković, Zoran, Border Police Directorate, Ministry of the Interior, Republic of Serbia, date of interview: 5/11/2012.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Dane Taleski

The region of South East Europe (SEE) is a social construction. The countries of the former Yugoslavia: Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Macedonia, together with Albania. The transport infrastructure between the countries is in place and being improved. Trade relations are strong and there are strong economic incentives to cooperate. Some unresolved bilateral disputes and unresolved reconciliation represent impediments to regional cooperation. Where this is the case the political leadership has been more keen to set up obstacles to regional cooperation than to find path ways through the policies of »low politics«.

Despite that, there is a growing number of regional cooperation initiatives in different policy areas. The EU integration process pushes regional cooperation forward. The efforts are particularly sustained by the work of the RCC and the secretariats of regional initiatives. There are numerous reports and documents on the various initiatives. However, a comprehensive overview of the impact of the initiatives is missing. Some of the existing research is out-dated or focused on the meaning and construction of the region.

The main idea behind our research was to measure the impact of regional-level initiatives and policies at national-level institutions and processes. Our understanding was that regional cooperation cannot develop without the support and involvement of national-level institutions. The research was built on the existing theoretical understanding of regional cooperation. Further on, we used some of the existing proposals for developing indica-

tors for measuring regional cooperation as methodological guidance. We chose the positivist research method and literature because we thought it was most appropriate for our research interests. Our main interest was not to see how the region was constructed and was developing, but to assess how existing regional initiatives are carried out at national level. The research findings were not envisaged only as an academic contribution, but also as a useful policy contribution.

The main research question concerned how the regional initiatives in South East Europe work in practice at the national level in the countries involved. Further questions that we addressed are: What effects, if any, have the regional initiatives and polices had at national level? What kind of impact have the regional initiatives and policies had on national-level institutions and regulations?

For the analysis we chose and juxtaposed three regional initiatives from justice and home affairs and three from social development. These were: the Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre (SECI/SELEC), the Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative (MARRI), the Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative (RAI), the Regional Programme on Social Security Coordination and Social Security Reforms in South-East Europe (RP-SSCSSR), the Centre of Public Employment Services of Southeast European Countries (CPESSEC) and the South-Eastern Europe Health Network (SEEHN).

In each of these initiatives we measured the impact in three dimensions: implementation, local ownership and gender. Our re-

search shows that regional cooperation initiatives had a limited impact at national level with regard to implementation and some impact with regard to local ownership. The legislative basis for regional initiatives is in place in all SEE countries. Signing the regional agreements was sufficient for this. Further on, it was necessary for the countries to adopt EU standards, which fostered the legal framework for regional cooperation. However, this was not followed by investments in administration and technical capacities. The budget allocation for regional cooperation is limited to contribution fees for the initiatives, and those are not always paid regularly. Funds for improving institutional capacities still come predominantly from foreign donors.

Practices and procedures at national level for dealing with regional initiatives are informal and on an ad hoc basis. The process is not institutionalized. Issues are dealt with when they appear at regional level and when the country is preparing for or chairing a regional initiative. The decision making is institutionalized but is top-down. Higher political levels have the most to say about regional cooperation issues. Coordination and communication among national-level institutions included in regional cooperation are weak and underdeveloped. Hence the eagerness of the countries to be involved in regional cooperation is limited. If high-ranking political officials are included there is some momentum for regional cooperation. Otherwise, countries wait until their chairmanship comes to put their interests forward in regional cooperation initiatives.

In most countries women are well represented in national institutions dealing with regional cooperation. However, this does not necessarily translate into gender balance in leadership or managerial positions. Practices of gender mainstreaming were not reported because they are seen as not necessary or there is insufficient awareness.

Cooperation in justice and home affairs initiatives is more advanced and institutionalized than in social development. National-level institutions are more engaged when it comes to justice and home affairs issues. These initiatives had a greater impact on national institutions. The reason for this is that greater political importance is attached to issues concerning justice and home affairs. EU integration is the most important factor pushing regional cooperation forward. On the other hand, the regional cooperation initiatives at national level depend on domestic political leadership. Justice and home affairs issues are high on the EU's political agenda. Hence they are high on the agenda of the national political elites. For the latter this gives greater incentives to focus more on regional initiatives in justice and home affairs than to focus on social development.

This is particularly true for SECI/SELEC and MARRI, although not so much for RAI. On the other hand, social development initiatives have best practices and success stories worth sharing. Through SEEHN a much needed regional centre for mental health was set up in BiH and kidney transplantation was made possible in Montenegro. The work of RP-SSC-SSR was followed by twinning projects in Croatia and Macedonia. There are thus tangible results for citizens from regional cooperation in health and the cooperation on social issues has been used to further improve national capacities.

Our findings run contrary to neo-functionalist assumptions that regional cooperation can move forward more easily in policy areas of low politics and translate to high politics. Regional cooperation is an elite-driven process in South East Europe. However, political elites see EU integration as primary. They consider regional cooperation as added value or as necessary for moving forward in EU integration. Political elites in South East Europe

do not seem willing to finds ways to improve cooperation in areas of low politics. In contrast, if they want to slow down the process they are willing to put up political obstacles, even in areas of low politics. However, when the EU applies strong pressure and has expectations from cooperation even in sensitive areas, such as justice and home affairs, they are willing to follow. A genuine political will to commit to and support regional cooperation is still low in South East Europe, however. The lack of budget allocation and lack of investment in administrative and technical capacities corroborate this point.

South East European countries need to invest more in human resources, administrative capacities and technical infrastructure to support regional cooperation initiatives. National-level institutions definitely need to allocate more resources to support regional cooperation. They also need to increase the visibility of initiatives, especially in publicizing the success stories and best practices.

International actors, namely the EU, should continue to push and support regional cooperation. At the present time of economic crisis and austerity policies, any contribution from foreign donors to support regional cooperation would be welcomed. RCC should continue to keep the countries of South East Europe on track with regard to regional cooperation. It should also continue to push them to engage more in the initiatives.

National political elites in South East Europe should put less politics and more policies in regional cooperation. Unresolved disputes and reconciliation will not be helped if political obstacles are set up in different policy areas. On the contrary, if pathways are found in different policy areas to improve regional cooperation, then relations between the countries will improve. This will alleviate the search for solutions to disputes and aid the reconciliation process.

National-level institutions would be wise to undertake a merit-based approach to the appointment of personnel and staff dealing with regional cooperation initiatives. They should also take care not to lose know-how and skills when staff are rotated or seconded. A process of training and re-training of staff would be useful in that regard. National institutions need to set up administrative structures and procedures that will be involved in regional cooperation initiatives. Standing meetings or institutionalized practices concerning regional initiatives would help the work of the administration. Currently, sometimes there is a lack of communication and coordination even among the staff involved in same regional initiative. Some countries have a directorate within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that oversees and coordinates all regional initiatives. Their work needs to be strengthened and improved. A registry of all initiatives and persons involved should be made publicly accessible.

National-level institutions need to include more civil society organizations in their work on regional initiatives. Civil society organisations have limited capacities and interests, but they could be a valuable asset in terms of policy consultations and public promotion of activities. National institutions would be wise to set up a networking database of civil society organisations, detailing their expertise.

Finally, national institutions should use their experience and knowledge to further develop regional cooperation and to improve national capacities. The RP-SSCSSR twinning follow-up projects in Macedonia and Croatia are good examples of that. Similar projects aimed at strengthening the institutions should be possible under the IPA framework.

Monitoring Regional Cooperation in South East Europe

List of contributors and think-tanks

Albania

Alba Cela (principal researcher) and Enfrid Islami (country researcher)

Albanian Institute for International Studies (AIIS), Tirana

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Lejla Kablar (principal researcher) and Zoran Matija Kulundžić (country researcher)

Foreign Policy Initiative (FPI), Sarajevo

Croatia

Sandro Knezović (principal researcher)

Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO), Zagreb

Kosovo

Fatmir Curri (principal researcher) and Mimika Loshi (country researcher)

Kosovo Civil Society Foundation (KCSF), Prishtina

Macedonia

Dane Taleski (regional coordinator) and Martin Pechijareski (principal researcher)

Institute for Social Democracy »Progress«, Skopje

Montenegro

Nenad Koprivica (principal researcher), Dženita Brčvak (country researcher) and Emir Kalač (country researcher)

Centre for Democracy and Human Rights (CEDEM), Podgorica

Serbia

Filip Ejdus (principal researcher)

Belgrade Centre for Security Policy (BCSP)