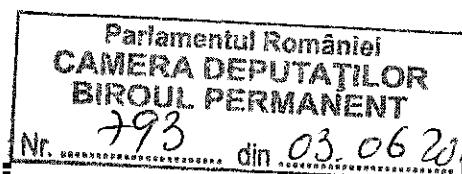


APROBAT

In sedinta Biroului permanent al
Camerei Deputatilor

din data de 03.06.2015



Parlamentul României
Camera Deputaților

București, 2 iunie 2015

INFORMARE
privind participarea la
Sesiunea plenară a Adunării Parlamentare a SEECP
- Tirana, 22-23 mai 2015 -

În perioada 22-23 mai 2015 s-a desfășurat la Tirana, Albania, Sesiunea plenară a Adunării Parlamentare a Procesului de Cooperare din Europa de Sud-Est (**AP SEECP**), sub Președinția-în-exercițiu (**PiE**) albaneză.

În baza invitațiilor avansate de gazde, au participat: delegații naționale reprezentând cele 12 parlamente membre la AP SEECP, între care șase la nivel de președinte de parlament, reprezentanți ai unor organizații internaționale sau regionale (Parlamentul European, Adunarea Baltică, Adunarea Parlamentară a Cooperării Economice a Mării Negre, Consiliul Nordic, Consiliul Cooperării Regionale), ai unor misiuni diplomatice la Tirana din statele participante la Procesul de Cooperare din Europa de Sud-Est (**SEECP**) și ai Delegației UE la Tirana, ai Secretariatului Regional pentru Cooperare Parlamentară în Europa de Sud-Est de la Sofia (**RSPC SEE**) și ai Priștinei (în calitate de invitat special), precum și reprezentanți ai unor diverse instituții din țara gazdă.

Delegația Parlamentului României la AP SEECP a fost condusă de către doamna deputat Gabriela-Maria Podașcă (PSD), iar din componența sa a făcut parte și doamna deputat Luminița-Pachel Adam (grup PSD - membru UNPR). De asemenea, a participat și domnul consilier Mario Ruse, coordonator național al delegației.

În marja Sesiunii plenare au avut loc, în ziua de 22 mai 2015, reuniuni pentru alegeri ale comisiilor generale, reuniunea Grupului de lucru ad hoc (**GLAh**) și reuniunea Comisiei permanente.

Reuniunile comisiilor generale au condus la următoarele rezultate pentru următorul mandat de un an:

- Președinția Comisiei generale pentru justiție, afaceri interne și cooperare în materie de securitate a revenit Parlamentului sârb, prin dna Katarina Rakić;
- Președinția Comisiei generale pentru economie, infrastructură și energie a revenit Parlamentului bulgar prin doamna Diana Yordanova;
- Președinția Comisiei generale pentru dezvoltare socială, educație, cercetare și știință a revenit Parlamentului albanez, prin doamna Esmeralda Shkja.

În cadrul **reuniunii GLAh** s-a încercat clarificarea locației sediului secretariatului organizației prin abordarea în mod conjugat cu conținutul proiectului de Raport al GLAh, în special în privința extinderii sau nu pentru încă un an a mandatului acestei structuri.

Domnul Taulant Balla, Albania, care a prezidat lucrările în calitate de președinte al GLAh, a prezentat bilanțul opțiunilor exprimate pentru sediul secretariatului, astfel:

- în favoarea sediului la Istanbul (propunerea Parlamentului din Ankara) s-au exprimat parlamente din 8 state (Albania, Bosnia și Herțegovina, Croația, Republica Macedonia, Muntenegru, Serbia, Slovenia și Turcia);
- în favoarea locației la Sofia (propunerea Parlamentului din Sofia) s-au exprimat parlamente din 3 state (Bulgaria, Grecia și România);
- Parlamentul din Republica Moldova nu și-a exprimat oficial poziția;
- reprezentanții unora dintre delegații, cazul părții române, au precizat în reuniune sau prin comunicările scrise efectuate că opțiunile nu presupun implicit acceptarea bugetului și a contribuțiilor aferente, care mai trebuie discutate.

Reprezentanții parlamentelor din Slovenia, Muntenegru și Turcia, invocând regula consensului, au blocat, la inițiativa reprezentantului sloven, propunerea părții bulgare, anunțată anterior în scris, de a extinde cu un an mandatul GLAH pentru a putea continua astfel dezbaterile aspectelor bugetare și a încerca o soluție consensuală negociată pe problema sediului secretariatului, cu toate că acest blocaj implică inexistența pe mandatul viitoare PiE bulgare a unei structuri a Adunării care să opereze pe această problematică între Sesiunile plenare.

Reprezentanții celor trei delegații menționate au solicitat apoi ca decizia cu privire la sediul secretariatului să fie adoptată cu majoritate simplă, apreciind că este o problemă de natură strict tehnică. Acest aspect a fost contestat de câteva delegații, inclusiv de către unele care susțin propunerea Parlamentului din Ankara, așa cum a fost cazul delegației croate care a precizat că problema sediului secretariatului are clare conotații politice, apreciere care este în consonanță cu cele agreate în reuniunea fostului Grup de lucru al Dimensiunii Parlamentare, desfășurată la Ohrid în mai 2013, în preambulul Conferinței Președinților de Parlamente.

După o discuție în care s-au adus argumente de natură politică și procedurală, domnul Balla a consemnat că nu se poate ajunge la un consens și, prin urmare, aceste probleme vor fi transferate spre o decizie plenului Sesiunii Adunării din 23 mai.

Reuniunea Comisiei permanente care a urmat a fost prezidată tot de domnul Taulant Balla, ca reprezentant al PiE albaneze.

Reuniunea s-a concentrat pe discutarea amendamentelor primite, în termenul de 15 mai 2015, la proiectul de Declarație al Sesiunii plenare propus de PiE albaneză. Punctul critic a fost constituit de amendamentele privind paragraful din proiectul de Declarație al Sesiunii plenare care se referea la modul de adresare pentru participarea Priștinei în AP SEECP.

Propuneri de noi amendamente, altele decât cele avansate în termenul de 15 mai 2015, nu au întrunit, susținerea necesară pentru a fi promovate.

Delegația română a specificat în lucrări că va susține rezultatul negocierii dintre delegația sârbă și cea albaneză, acestea reușind, prin negocieri bilaterale prelungite, să ajungă la o formulă comună acceptată ulterior și de ceilalți participanți (constând în invitarea Priștinei pentru a participa pe bază permanentă la activitățile și reunitiunile AP SEECP la toate nivelurile și în termeni egali, fiind astfel preluate prevederi din Declarația Summit-ului SEECP de la București din 25 iunie 2014).

Tot în cadrul acestei reuniuni au fost trecute în revistă și agreate punctele de pe ordinea de zi a proiectului de agendă pentru Sesiunea plenară de la Tirana.

În final, s-a trecut la discutarea amendamentelor la Regulamentul organizației, **toate inițiate de delegația română și anterior asumate de Comisia permanentă** în reuniunea acesteia din 18 aprilie 2015.

Mai întâi s-a acceptat consensual propunerea delegației elene de a ajusta un amendament privind cvorumul pentru reuniunile GLAH și apoi, având în vedere rezultatul negocierilor din GLAH și din Comisia permanentă, la propunerea delegației române, s-a agreat, tot consensual, eliminarea ultimului paragraf cu rol tranzitoriu din Regulament, deoarece prevedea acțiuni de realizat strict în cadrul oferit de Sesiunea plenară de la Tirana.

A rezultat astfel un set de șapte propuneri de amendamente care au fost avansate pentru aprobarea Sesiunii plenare de a doua zi.

Sesiunea plenară din 23 mai a fost prezidată de domnul Ilir Meta, Președintele Parlamentului din Republica Albania.

În deschiderea sesiunii au rostit alocuțiuni domnul Ilir Meta și apoi domnul Ioan Mircea Pașcu, vicepreședinte al Parlamentului European, care a transmis mesajul Președintelui Martin Schulz adresat participanților la reuniune.

A urmat o dezbatere pe tema generală: *"Rolul parlamentelor în procesul de integrare și schimbul de experiențe și contribuții în acest cadru"*.

În sinteză, **în intervenția avută cu acest prilej, doamna deputat Podașcă:**

- a reamintit că motivația acestei organizații constă și în valorificarea oportunităților care rezidă din lucrurile care unesc participanții;
- a subliniat că, prin trecerea la formatul de Adunare Parlamentară cu ocazia Sesiunii inaugurale de la București din mai 2014, s-au creat noi instrumente utile, între care, cele trei comisii generale, structuri specializate care furnizează proiecte de documente pentru considerația plenului Adunării;
- a evidențiat câteva oportunități și direcții de acțiune în contextul temei reuniunii menționând, între altele, că *"Încurajarea tuturor formelor de dialog și cooperare parlamentară este principiul ce stă la baza diplomației parlamentare române. De aceea, este extrem de important să găsim modalități eficiente și practice de cooperare între parlamentele naționale, astfel încât să venim cu cele mai bune soluții la provocările actuale. România a încurajat dintotdeauna și va continua să sprijine procesul de extindere a Uniunii Europene, considerând-o una dintre prioritățile spațiului european."*

A urmat prezentarea documentelor adoptate de cele trei comisii generale, punct la care, **în calitate de Raportor desemnat de către Comisia generală pentru dezvoltare socială, educație, cercetare și știință a AP SEECP, doamna deputat Podașcă, aleasă Președinte al Comisiei pentru perioada mai 2014-mai 2015, a prezentat pe scurt bilanțul activității comisiei și documentele adoptate de aceasta.**

Raportul și Rezoluția acestei Comisii includ o serie de recomandări menite să atenueze și să prevină fenomenul excluziunii sociale în rândul copiilor, printre care monitorizarea implementării Strategiei Europa 2020 și alinierea cadrului legislativ din domeniul protecției copilului la normele internaționale și regionale. **În cadrul lucrărilor, doamna deputat Podașcă a afirmat:** *"Avem nevoie în primul rând de o abordare comună în ce privește excluziunea socială în rândul copiilor. Documentele prezentate astăzi în plenul AP SEECP reprezintă un angajament ferm privind respectarea drepturilor copilului din partea tuturor statelor participante."*

Voturile din Sesiunea plenară pe documente, inclusiv pe Raportul GLAh, au fost precedate de o dezbatere informală organizată ad hoc, la care au participat reprezentanți ai delegațiilor, în încercarea de a identifica o soluție mediată.

La revenirea în plen Președintele parlamentului turc, a repus în discuție problema unei decizii cu majoritate simplă pentru soluționarea problemei sediului secretariatului în favoarea propunerii de a fi găzduit la Istanbul, punct susținut de președinții parlamentelor din Muntenegru și Slovenia. Delegația bulgară a replicat că decizia trebuie luată prin consens, iar partea albaneză a semnalat că nu există consens privind interpretarea Regulamentului pe această problemă.

Delegația slovenă a apreciat că o decizie pe această problemă nu trebuie să se ia la nivelul unor reprezentanți desemnați, motiv pentru care, la Sesiunea plenară din Bulgaria din 2016, pentru a tranșa problema, este util să participe toți președinții de parlamente.

În final, s-a adoptat Raportul GLAh, anexat, fără precizări privind mandatul (ceea ce implică înseamnă neprelungirea acestuia) iar problema locației

secretariatului a rămas netranșată, urmând ca următoarea PiE bulgară să prospecteze posibilități de negociere care să conducă la o decizie la Sesiunea plenară din mai-iunie 2016, în Bulgaria.

Au mai fost apoi adoptate: rapoartele și rezoluțiile avansate de cele trei comisii generale, Regulamentul Secretariatului, amendamentele la Regulamentul organizației, Programul de lucru pentru perioada 2015-2016 și Declarația reuniunii (*anexate*), precum și decizia ca AP SEECP să aplice pentru dobândirea statutului de observator pe lângă Conferința Parlamentară a Mării Baltice.

La finalul reuniunii, Președintele de ședință a invitat delegația din Priștina să participe la activitățile și reuniunile AP SEECP în conformitate cu prevederile adoptate prin Declarația de la Tirana, iar apoi a mulțumit participanților pentru prezență, urând succes viitoarei PiE bulgare.

Propunem ca prezenta Informare să fie distribuită către:

- Direcția pentru organizații parlamentare internaționale a Senatului României;
- Comisiile parlamentare din Parlamentul României cu atribuții în domeniile vizate de prevederi cuprinse în secțiunile operative ale Rezoluțiilor adoptate la Tirana;
- Direcția de specialitate din Ministerul Afacerilor Externe.

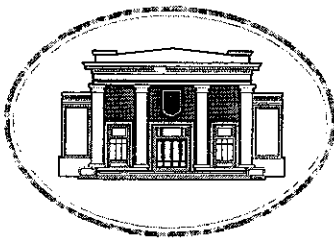
Deputat Gabriela-Maria Podașcă



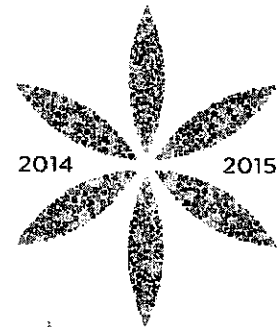
Deputat Luminița-Pachel Adam



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SEECP ALBANIAN CHAIRMANSHIP
PARLIAMENTARY DIMENSION
REGIONAL OWNERSHIP IN ACTION



Tirana, 23.05.2015 Adopted

**SECOND SESSION OF THE SEECP PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY
TIRANA, May 23, 2015**

**DECLARATION
of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly**

We, the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly:

1. **Reaffirming** the principles enshrined in the Charter of good neighbourly relations, stability, security and cooperation, signed in Bucharest in 2000, as the founding document of the SEECP;
2. **Following** the Declaration on the Inauguration of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly (SEECP PA) adopted on May 10, 2014;
3. **Guided** by the Rules of Procedure of the SEECP PA adopted on 10 May 2014 which establish the functioning of the SEECP PA;
4. **Welcoming** the establishment of three General Committees of the SEECP PA, namely on: Economy, Infrastructure and Energy (Annual meeting held in Sofia, 20-21 March 2015); Justice, Home Affairs and Security Cooperation (Annual meeting held in Istanbul, 9-10 February 2015); and Social Development, Education, Research and Science (Annual meeting held in Bucharest, 26-27 February 2015);
5. **Praising** the work done of the three General Committees of the SEECP PA, including the adoption of Committee reports and Committee resolutions, which bring a substantial level of knowledge to the inter-parliamentary cooperation in the SEECP area;
6. **Welcoming** the work and the results achieved by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), as an operational arm of the SEECP;

7. **Acknowledging** the importance of the enlargement process and the commitments and reforms undertaken by all SEECP Participants in their EU integration efforts;
8. **Recognising** that the integration of Southeast Europe to the European Union represents one of the most important mechanisms for ensuring peace, stability and progress of the region;
9. **Acknowledging** the importance and role of parliaments in promoting further enlargement of the European Union and in transferring knowledge and experience to the parliaments of the SEECP participants that are engaged in the EU integration process;
10. **Having in mind** the commitment to the principle of "all inclusiveness" expressed at the Ohrid Conference of SEECP Presidents of Parliament of May 2013, as an important element of regional stability and long-term development, and acknowledging the Declaration of the June Bucharest Summit of Heads of State and Government of SEECP participating states, which "decided to invite Kosovo*¹ to participate on a permanent basis in the SEECP activities and meetings, at all levels and on equal terms and which stated that "the Charter of the South East European Cooperation Process is to be interpreted and applied accordingly in order to allow the participation of Kosovo* in the SEECP activities and meetings, at all levels and on equal terms";
11. **Commending** the agreements reached between Belgrade and Pristina which contribute to further improving of the cooperation in the region;
12. **Committing** ourselves to promoting free, fair and transparent elections in the region and to observing the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, as a means of making our societies more democratic and more inclusive;

Have agreed to:

13. **Highlight** that the SEECP PA can play a key role in assisting the parliaments of the SEECP Participants to harmonize their own legislative framework with EU acquis by developing a comprehensive exchange of best practices, knowledge and experience with the Parliaments of EU member-states;
14. **Call** upon the parliaments of the SEECP PA Participants that are already members of the European Union to assist the parliaments of the SEECP PA Participants not yet

¹ *This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of independence.

members of the European Union in the transfer of knowledge and experience related to the implementation of the *acquis communautaire* and the setting up of the organisational and technical structure of parliaments;

15. **Confirm** that, until having a fully functional Secretariat and an operational budget, the national parliament holding the Chairmanship-in-Office of the SEECP PA shall serve, with assistance of the Regional Secretariat for Parliamentary Cooperation in South East Europe, as an ad hoc Secretariat for the Plenary Session, the Standing Committee, the President and the Bureau of the Assembly while the national parliament holding the Chairmanship of a General Committee or of an Ad hoc Working Group shall also fulfil the tasks of an ad hoc Secretariat for the respective body of the Assembly;
16. **Invite** Pristina to participate on a permanent basis in the SEECP PA activities and meetings, at all levels and on equal terms.
17. **Aim** at coordinating as appropriate with the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Directorate Generals within the European Commission on issues relevant to the functioning of the SEECP PA General Committees; including developing mechanisms of information sharing and discussion on the EU's structural pre-accession funds and European Neighborhood Instrument funds (IPA II and ENI respectively) in the SEECP region; in line with the SEECP June 2014 Summit Declaration when the Heads of State and Government confirmed their "commitment for a sound use of EU funding, taking into account the regulations applicable to the status of SEECP participants (EU member states, candidates, potential candidates and partners) and insist on the importance of promoting meaningful projects taking advantage of the new IPA and ENI 2014-2020 framework";²
18. **Recommend** to the next Chairmanship-in-Office of the SEECP PA to make every effort to continue developing the SEECP PA, exploring the feasibility that General Committees hold more than one meeting per year, requesting the SEECP C-i-O to report to the SEECP PA on annual basis on the follow-up given by the SEECP Governmental Dimension to the reports, resolutions and recommendations adopted by the SEECP PA and its General Committees;
19. **Invite** the Secretary General of the RCC to introduce and discuss RCC projects and programmes with the General Committees of the SEECP PA.
20. **Invite**, on regular basis, the RCC Secretary General to inform SEECP PA on RCC activities.

^{2 2} SEECP Summit Declaration by Heads of State and Government, 25 June 2014, Bucharest, paragraph 1.9

Tirana, 23.05.2015 Adopted

**SEECF PA GENERAL COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE, HOME AFFAIRS AND
SECURITY COOPERATION**

9-10 FEBRUARY 2015

İSTANBUL

REPORT

on

OPPORTUNITIES FOR COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF JUSTICE

Rapporteur: Mr. Ali ŞAHİN, Ankara

Introduction

The systematic, continuous and extensive cooperation among the countries of South East Europe in the field of justice is one of the most important pillars of the wider cooperation in the area and may decisively influence the cooperation in other fields, such as those of the economic and social development.

A prerequisite for a successful cooperation in the field of justice, in any form, is the promotion and deepening of judicial reform in the countries of South East Europe. Judicial reform should aim to enhance the efficiency and speed of justice as well as strengthen the independence of justice, in order to enhance the feeling of confidence in the judicial systems. Judicial reform is at a different stage of development in the countries of South East Europe, but what is of significant importance, in any case, is not only the establishment of institutional and legal frameworks for judicial reform, but the implementation of these frameworks in practice.

With effective, independent and credible judicial systems, the countries of South East Europe will have a solid foundation for broad judicial cooperation. Judicial cooperation in civil and criminal matters should emphasize and make a decisive contribution to combating particularly serious cross border crime (organized crime, corruption, drugs) as well as to ease the lives of citizens and to enhance human rights. Judicial cooperation in civil and criminal matters could be further developed through the participation of all countries in Southeast Europe in existing multilateral frameworks for cooperation and through the full implementation of relevant international conventions, after their ratification. Furthermore, enhanced operational activities, such as exchange of information and good practices, as well as the training and the exchange of knowledge and experience among the legal practitioners (judges, lawyers etc.) of South East Europe can significantly contribute to judicial cooperation.

With the contribution of the South East European countries that are members of the European Union, the cooperation in the field of justice in South East Europe should take advantage of the rich EU experience in the field of judicial cooperation, which is founded on the principles of mutual trust, enhanced access to justice and balanced strengthening of procedural rights.

Opportunities for Parliamentary Cooperation in the field of Justice

Parliaments worldwide perform three core functions: to represent citizens interests, to pass laws and to monitor the actions of the government. They perform a legislative function because, in addition to introducing legislation on their own, they have the power to amend, approve or reject government draft laws. This function is strongly linked to the representation function in that it is through the will of the people that the parliament receives its authority in democratic countries.

The exact means by which a parliament is engaged in the law making process varies depending on the type of parliamentary system. In most parliaments with permanent committees, proposed legislation is introduced formally on the floor of the house, and then referred to one or more committees with jurisdiction over the legislation. Relevant committees at the national parliaments responsible for judicial affairs are usually called Justice or Legal Affairs Committees.

Although the names of the committees may differ from one country to other, cooperation among the committees specialized on legal affairs and justice is an important component of the wider cooperation mechanisms within our region as far as the justice issues is concerned. An effective and transparent cooperation among these committees will be a great asset in tackling various aspects of justice through harmonization of legislation and exchange of information and expertise on legal affairs.

Regular meetings of the representatives of the committees on legal affairs and justice of the SEECP PA member parliaments can be organized by the Chairmanship in Office of the SEECP PA. These kind of meetings will enhance parliamentary cooperation on justice by bringing together competent authorities of the relevant parliaments in line with a pre-determined agenda. Issues of significance with regard to legal affairs and justice that relates to the common priorities of all the countries in our region can be brought to the floor and important decisions and recommendations can be taken.

Another important step with regard to parliamentary cooperation in the field of justice is the designation of focal points at the respective national parliaments. Focal points can be assigned to a high level bureaucrat within the administrative structure of the parliament such as an expert working preferably at the relevant committees dealing with legal affairs and justice. Designation of focal points will facilitate rapid communication in cases of information requests and facilitate effective cooperation in the field of justice with regard to the exchange of information and expertise.

International Judicial Cooperation in Combatting Cross Border Organized Crime

In addition to parliamentary cooperation, there is a wide range of opportunities for cooperation in the field of justice at the governmental level as well. One of the most significant cooperation mechanisms is the ongoing international judicial cooperation in combatting cross border organized crime in our region.

Elements of organized crime perform wide ranging cross border activities by making use of the advantages offered by the technological developments. Organized crime, manifested and triggered by economic instability, unemployment, lack of education, political and legal vacuums and moral corruption, has become a problem that threatens not only the individual and societal but also the national and international security. In addition to typical activity areas such as illegal drug trafficking, human trafficking, fraud and arms smuggling, organized crime rings have added various kinds of cybercrimes to their portfolios as a result of the advances in IT technologies. Organized crime, in this respect, has become a significant threat to SEECP PA members and the people in the last decades.

The fact that the billions of dollars circulated by organized crime rings every year that is higher than the budgets of the many of the developing countries manifests that organized crime is a threat not only to the national security but also to the social and economic development of the countries. According to the data presented by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 320 trillion dollars has been procured from illegal drug trafficking, the highest figure among cross border crime. This figure is higher than the national income of the 90% of the countries all over the world. Cross border crime exploits legal regulations, uncontrolled borders and conveniences in goods and money transfer as a means of technological advances and globalization. Furthermore, lack of coordination among competent authorities of the countries and problems in information exchange paves the way for illegal activities of cross border crime.

Success of the struggle with cross border organized crime depends on a sophisticated strategy and international cooperation. From this point of view, it is important for the countries of our region to participate in the programs for developing bilateral and multilateral cooperation for combatting cross border organized crime, sharing of experiences in different platforms such as the United Nations and playing an active role in various activities.

A prominent and progressive cooperation that exists among the countries of the Southeast Europe with regard to combatting cross border organized crime is The Southeast European

Prosecutors Advisory Group (SEEPAG). Ankara, Athens, Belgrade, Bucharest, Budapest, Kishinev, Podgorica, Sarajevo, Skopje, Sofia, Tirana and Zagreb are the members of the SEEPAG. SEEPAG is an international mechanism of judicial cooperation, formed by the countries of the SEE region in 12 December 2003, with an express intention of facilitating judicial cooperation in significant trans-border crime investigations and cases. This initiative recognizes that, as trans-border crime transcends national borders, the strategy for combating it must have a regional as well as a national dimension. By improving the available facilities for mutual legal assistance, the SEEPAG seeks to increase the capacity of individual states to suppress, investigate and prosecute serious trans-border crimes.

The SEEPAG is composed of national representatives who are high ranked experienced prosecutors or judges. The role of the SEEPAG involves two closely related but conceptually distinct functions. First, the SEEPAG is a network of experienced prosecutors who assist the Southeast European Law Enforcement Center (SELEC) in operational matters and facilitate, to the greatest extent possible, the rapid exchange of information and evidence in trans-border investigations. By linking together a network of experienced prosecutors, the SEEPAG seeks to fill a critical gap in the region by promoting the timely exchange of information and evidence.

The SEEPAG's second function is to provide guidance, assistance, and feedback to lawmakers in the region on justice and law enforcement issues. By capitalizing on the unique knowledge and concrete operational experience of criminal prosecutors, SEEPAG provide a link between the conceptual framework of laws and their affect at an operational level. By combining the legal skills and functional experience of prosecutors, SEEPAG assist in the creation and harmonization of laws and regional agreements aimed at combating organized crime. The SEEPAG can also provide legal guidance and opinions on various legal issues that arise in the context of regional cooperation on justice matters.

By performing these functions the SEEPAG enhances co-operation and co-ordination between national investigating and prosecuting authorities allowing all law enforcement agencies to act more effectively, both individually and collectively, when dealing with international crime and more importantly to bring criminals to justice more quickly. Utilizing the advantages of the modern age in international legal cooperation will undoubtedly enhance the effectiveness of the cooperation and lead to the achievement of success in combatting cross border organized crime. Support given to this mechanism by the member countries by

means of a good planning and motivation will be influential in achieving the assigned objectives.

Southeast European Law Enforcement Center (SELEC), on the other hand, is a unique operational organization which facilitates the rapid exchange of information between law enforcement agencies from different countries regarding trans-border criminal cases. Ankara, Athens, Belgrade, Bucharest, Budapest, Kishinev, Podgorica, Sarajevo, Skopje, Sofia, Tirana and Zagreb are the members of the SELEC. The objective of SELEC, within the framework of cooperation among competent authorities, is to provide support for Member States and enhance regional coordination in preventing and combating crime, including serious and organized crime such as drug trafficking, human trafficking and illegal immigration, smuggling and customs fraud, financial and cybercrimes, where such crime involves or appears to involve an element of trans-border activity. Main tasks of SELEC within this framework is to coordinate regional operations and support investigations and crime prevention activities of the Member States in trans-border cases; provide the Member States with the opportunity to exchange information and criminal intelligence and offer operational assistance in a quick and timely manner; collect, collate, analyze, process and disseminate information and criminal intelligence; produce strategic analysis and threat assessments related to its objective; establish, operate and maintain a computerized information system, which implies also to ensure the protection of personal data.

CONCLUSION

Ongoing cooperation activities within the SEECF both in the parliamentary and governmental level will contribute to the development of an integrated policy regarding the judicial cooperation, widening of the scope of judicial cooperation and enhancing its effectiveness, combatting cross border organized crime, harmonization of the legislation, joint utilization of IT and communication technologies, organizing mutual training programs and advancing judicial cooperation in the bilateral level as well.

Provision of mutual understanding and confidence in regional judicial cooperation, organization of negotiations on common concepts can be foreseen as short-term gains. In the medium term, on the other hand, main objective is the creation of a network of contact points among the countries of the region and initiation of a direct communication channel between judicial authorities. In the long term, ultimate aim is to establish regional international bodies through joint endeavours of all the countries in the region with a task of preparation and

implementation of multilateral conventions for the harmonization of legislation among them and reports that contain recommendations for the improvement of judicial systems and cooperation.

Existence of regional dimension of cooperation of the participating countries in the field of judiciary, rule of law and fight against crime and corruption is the essential element and sine qua non prerequisite for building democratic society and the rule of law state. Activities in the scope of work of the SEECP PA General Committee on Justice, Home Affairs and Security Cooperation will undoubtedly contribute to better exchange of information and best practice in the field of judiciary, home affairs and security.

The European and Euro-Atlantic civilization values have been laid down in the guidelines for the future development of South-East Europe in order to transform it into a region of political stability and economic and social prosperity, which inevitably necessitates applying single standards with a view to improving the regional cooperation in the area of justice. The creation of an intensive regional cooperation in the area of justice within the SEECP will contribute to optimizing the work of justice institutions, to a more effective and fast judicial proceeding and to improving the quality of justice. The institutional interaction in the system of justice at a regional level, within the SEECP, is a precondition to identify existing latent local problems and solve them using the accumulated foreign experience and introducing good and proven practices.

Our future activities need to be focused on drafting the wording of the joint proposals in order to upgrade the coordination between the national authorities, parliaments and governments, regional and international organizations, with the aim of developing the orchestrated and integrated action.

In the forthcoming period we need to jointly map the priorities and activities necessary for overcoming the main challenges in the region in the field of judiciary, home affairs and security and integrate our efforts in agreeing on the activities and projects in this field.

Tirana, 23.05.2015 Adopted

**SEEC PA GENERAL COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE, HOME AFFAIRS AND
SECURITY COOPERATION**

9-10 FEBRUARY 2015

İSTANBUL

RESOLUTION

Reaffirming our commitment to the continuous contribution for fulfilling the letter and spirit of the Bucharest Charter of Good Neighborly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in South East Europe, as well as of the other relevant international documents ratified by our parliaments;

Following the Declaration on the inauguration of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly adopted on 10 May 2014;

Guided by the Rules of Procedure of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly adopted on 10 May 2014 which establish the functioning of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly;

In accordance with the Work Program 2014/2015 adopted on 11 May 2014 and the Working Group Report adopted by the Working Group of the SEECP parliamentary dimension and approved during the Inaugural Session on 10 May 2014;

Having regard to the existing practices in the area of justice in the SEECP participating states;

Guided by the objective of identifying the opportunities for cooperation in the area of justice in the SEECP participating states;

Acknowledging the existing mechanisms of cooperation at the governmental level in the field of justice;

Emphasizing the relevance and significance of the development of effective mechanisms for the enhancement of parliamentary cooperation in the field of justice;

Adhered to the aim of achieving common high standards for speed and effectiveness of the justice systems in the SEECP participating states;

Recognizing the need to work on achieving integrated actions of judges, prosecutors and other judiciary bodies in order to establish better regional cooperation in the field of judicial cooperation;

Emphasizing that sustainable quality of judiciary system guarantees the predictable judiciary practice, economic growth and foreign investments, and it is based on efficient governing structure and stable administrative capacities;

Recognizing the progress achieved in the international judicial cooperation in combatting cross border organized crime through effective mechanisms such as the Southeast European Prosecutors Advisory Group (SEEPAG) and the Southeast European Law Enforcement Center (SELEC);

Welcoming the policies adopted and the various measures taken by the SEECF PA participating states with regard to the Syrian and other refugees in their territories including all forms of humanitarian and legal arrangements;

The SEECF PA General Committee on Justice, Home Affairs and Security Cooperation, at its meeting held in İstanbul on February 9-10, 2015,

Calls on the SEECF participating states to participate fully at the existing cooperation mechanisms in the field of justice;

Invites all participating states to consider being a member of the SEEPAG and SELEC,

Recommends participating states to take relevant measures in order to facilitate fulfillment of mutual judicial assistance and information requests within the shortest time;

Advises participating states to share good practices in the field of justice;

Strongly recommends that the participating states assign focal points for parliamentary cooperation in the field of justice from within their respective parliaments;

Urges participating states to make every effort for the introduction of a mechanism that envisages joint meetings of the representatives of their parliamentary committees dealing with legal and judicial matters;

Encourages the work of universities in the region on the point of development of regional capacities for implementation of legal reforms, strengthening the scientific research, drafting regional legal publications and regulations;

Recommends participating states to support the efforts of the member states with regard to the Syrian and other refugees in their territories.

Tirana, 23.05.2015 Adopted

**General Committee on Economy, Infrastructure and Energy of the Parliamentary
Assembly of the South East European Cooperation Process (SEECP PA)**

Sofia, National Assembly, 20-21 March 2015

R E P O R T

on

“Improving the energy efficiency in South East Europe”

Rapporteur: Ms. Diana Yordanova, Sofia

The region of South-Eastern Europe is one of the most vulnerable ones in terms of energy due to its overdependence on Russia – a domineering supplier of energy resources. The countries in the region have insufficiently developed energy infrastructure and system coherence. Their markets have hardly started to develop which is also reflected in the lack of a functional regional market. This vulnerability was clearly identified through the recent stress tests performed by EC, too.

In the context of this reality, building the infrastructure and realizing the main diversification projects for the region as the main prerequisite for energy security must be the subject of consistent actions at the highest political levels in all South East European countries. The efforts are directed mainly at diversifying sources and routes of supplies, utilizing the possibilities of using own resources, meanwhile working towards building an integrated, liberalized and competitive regional and European energy market to allow all the countries from SEE to conform to the policies of the European Union.

A guarantee that the building of the regional energy market will be finalized soon is the implementation of the main infrastructure projects and the achievement of the desired levels of energy security for the region and for Europe. Better cooperation between SEE countries and the wider cooperation with international partners will provide a synergy for common efforts at achieving energy security. In that regard, the General Committee on Economy, Infrastructure and Energy highly appreciate the good cooperation – both bilateral, and in the context of the multilateral projects, initiatives and policies.

The present moment is also very important to all the countries from SEECP, given the common efforts of EU Member States to establish an Energy Union, whose benchmark is the integration of markets and the building of the necessary infrastructure and the projects for connecting national systems.

In the number of documents and decisions adopted recently, special focus is put on improving the coherence between the systems in our region, with a special emphasis on the priority nature of interconnectors with neighbouring countries.

On 25.02.2015 the deputy EC president and Energy Commissioner Maroš Šefčovič presented in Brussels the project for the establishment of an Energy Union.

According to the concept of the Energy Union, the European Commission suggests an integrated continent-wide energy system where energy flows freely across borders, based on and the best possible use of resources, and with effective regulation of energy markets at EU level, where necessary. Part of this policy is aimed at reframing the energy relationship with Russia, based on a level playing field for the mutual benefit of both sides, when the conditions are right, as well as at significantly reinforcing the powers and the independence of ACER to carry out regulatory functions at the European level. At the same time, in the context of the review of the Security of Gas Supply Regulation, the Commission will also propose to ensure appropriate transparency of commercial gas supply contracts that may have an impact on energy security, while safeguarding the confidentiality of sensitive information.

As part of EC's global energy policy, the intentions for certain EU regions to better coordinate are underway. Already on January 14th, 2015, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia signed a declaration for the common security of energy supplies and for the establishment of a

regional group coordinating gas supplies. Poland has suggested for those most dependent on Russian energy to be united in groups and to negotiate jointly with Russia. This idea concerns mainly countries from Eastern Europe.

Building of a developed regional energy infrastructure and the creation of a regional energy market are important parts of the future European energy market and a step towards the integration and stabilization of the European Union in terms of energy.

Creating a regional energy market and liberalizing trading in electricity

All countries from SEE report the need for a coordinated approach to the problems of energy policy in the region as a guarantee for quickly finishing the building of the regional energy market, the implementation of the main infrastructure projects and achieving the desired levels of energy security for the region and Europe. Therefore it is necessary to employ urgent measures for effective and consistent implementation and application of the provisions set out in the Third Energy Package by all EU Member States as well as by all the members of the Energy Community so as to provide a sound and market-driven investment climate throughout the whole European Union based on a stable and transparent European legal framework.

Connecting at the regional level in the energy sector includes establishment of a stable regulatory and market framework both in the region and in the EU, with an aim of attracting investors to the electricity and natural gas sectors in order to ensure stable energy supply necessary for the economic development and social stability, establishment of a uniform legal framework for trade in electricity and gas in the region and EU, improvement of energy supply security, enhancement of environmental conditions, increase in energy efficiency and use of renewable energy resources, development of a competitive energy market and establishment of a common energy market.

As specified in the materials sent by the parliaments from SEECP PA, many countries in the region set targets in their national energy strategies. The main priorities of their energy policies those countries specify to be:

- Security of energy supply and ensuring social and economic development, in the context of a future increase in energy demand;
- Ensuring economic competitiveness by maintaining a fair price for the final consumers;
- Liberalization of energy markets ensuring affordable prices and consumer protection in accordance with the relevant EU legislation
- Protecting the environment by limiting climate change effects, promotion of policies addressing climate change (RES, energy efficiency), moving to a competitive economy of low carbon consumption
- Diversification of energy resources and routes in order to avoid reliance on a single supplier of energy resources
- Sustainable exploitation of the mineral and energy potential of the region

We must not forget another very important fact. The energy security based on a developed regional gas infrastructure and the creation of a liquid and a competitive regional energy market is an important link in the chain of necessary steps and to the expansion of the European Union, because the development and the linking of energy infrastructures is one of

the reliable ways of fulfilling the European Perspective for the countries that are in the process of EU integration.

It is necessary to ensure coordination with the other countries in order to adopt a common trading platform – market coupling. In order to foster cross-border energy exchanges, the General Committee on Economy, Infrastructure and Energy stress the importance of timely adoption and implementation of network codes and guidelines for electricity throughout the European Union and continued work to ensure a commonly agreed operational framework for the efficient and non-discriminatory use and development of capacities in gas pipelines and electricity grids.

Building reliable interconnector links between the countries in the region with a view of establishing a single market and increasing the security of supplies

The priorities for the region's energy policies are in accordance with the main pillars of the international energy policy, promoted under EU and the international cooperation, including Cooperation Agreements, contacts in international organizations and dialogue both with neighbouring countries and with energy producer and transit countries.

Trials conducted under the Connecting Europe Facilities, such as establishing a list of Projects of Common Interest, have shown all EU Member States' interest to develop interconnection projects, as well as the interest of the various stakeholders/private investors to participate actively in the process.

The timely development of the Projects of Common Interest (PCIs) in the region is of considerable importance, since they will contribute to the further development of cross-border transfer capacities with positive impacts to the market integration as well as to the regional security of supply.

It is also necessary to note the concept of building, together with the SEE countries, a system for supplying, storing and allocating natural gas, based on an infrastructure of reversible interconnector links.

The national parliaments' contributions sent form the list of priority interconnectors for the region, which are:

- Interconnector Ruse (Sofia) – Giurgiu (Bucharest) (IBR) It is expected that the construction and installation works will be finished by the end of 2015 and that the interconnector will be commissioned immediately afterwards.
- Interconnector Stara Zagora (Sofia) – Komotini (Athens) (IGB). Currently there are regulatory procedures undergoing between the Energy and Water Regulatory Commission and Energy regulator RAE in accordance with EU's Third Energy Package (Art. 36 of Directive 2009/73/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13.07.2009 concerning common rules for the internal market in natural gas). Competent authorities in Sofia and Athens have issued positive decisions on the

Environmental Impact Assessment. It is expected that the construction and the connection of the national gas transmission system be finished by the end of 2017, and commercially commissioned in early 2018.

- Interconnector Lozenetz (Sofia) – Malkochlar (Ankara) (ITB). A joint working group has been formed to prepare a feasibility study which shall specify all the technical aspects, financial parameters and the possibility to attract European funding.
- Interconnector Sofia (Sofia) – Nish (Belgrade) (IBS). The project implementation is divided into two parts, the main purpose for this being the inability on the part of the authorities in Belgrade to perform the construction on their territory within the construction time tables of the Sofia section due to a lack of fund. The estimated deadline within which the construction of the Sofia section will be finished is 2017.
- New overhead power line with a length of 131 km between Reșița (Bucharest) and Pancevo (Belgrade), whose completion date is estimated for the year 2017. The new line will increase exchange capacity on the borders between the three neighbouring countries and intensify the North-South corridor from NE to SE Europe.
- Single circuit overhead power line between Suceava (Bucharest) and Bălți (Chișinău)
- the Ungheni (Chișinău) – Iași (Bucharest) pipeline was completed in August 2014, and now Bucharest is working together with Chișinău, in cooperation with the European Commission and international financial institutions to identify the most effective ways of implementing and supporting the next phases of the project, that is the completion of Ungheni – Chișinău segment.
- Maritsa East (Sofia) and Nea Santa (Athens). IPTO, in close collaboration with the TSO (ESO-EAD) is working in the framework of PCIs for the development of a 2nd interconnection line.

Further development of the infrastructure towards Central Europe will realize the planned strategic interconnector links North-South (CEE and SEE) of the Trans-European energy infrastructure, which will expand diversification and increase the security of supply for Europe.

All the countries from SEECp share the concept that the implementation of those priority projects for SEE, EU and Europe must be approached systematically and in a coordinated way. Common efforts are needed for their implementation.

The Ministry of Energy suggests that the programme of the Bulgarian Presidency of the South-Eastern Europe Cooperation Process, July 2015 – June 2016, should include a summit on the topic of “Strengthening of the Regional Energy Infrastructure” in April 2016.

Optimizing the balance between renewable and non-renewable energy resources

An important element of ensuring national energy security is energy efficiency, renewable energy resources and improved use of local energy resources.

In the whole world, increased population, globalization, rapid developments of technologies and increase of income and comfort level have caused the increase of energy consumption and the fossil fuels have been deemed the easiest way to meet this increased demand. However, by considering factors such as the limitation of the fossil fuels, oil crises, increase of energy prices and their effects in the world economy, climate change and environmental matters, energy efficiency and renewable energy could be the most rational solutions. The concept of efficient use of energy which was in the agenda of industrialized countries in the past is now a common principle of energy policies in all countries.

Targets for EU in 2020 are greenhouse gas emissions 20% lower than 1990, 20% of energy consumption from renewables and 20% increase in energy efficiency.

In implementation of this strategy, countries in the region of SEE include an increase in the share of renewable sources (RS) in their national targets.

Investment efforts must be directed not only towards commercial production of energy from renewable sources, but equally towards providing an infrastructure that exploits this energy, and last but not least towards stimulating consumption from renewable sources.

Openness to the regional energy market and, ultimately, to the European single market will create new opportunities for increased penetration of renewable energy.

The purpose of the cooperation of the countries in the region is to balance, in some larger territories, individual types of RS, like in North and West Europe – in the northern part of the Baltic Sea wind energy is predominant, unlike photovoltaic sources to the South.

In the near future SEE countries' efforts should be focused on creating competitiveness and financial sustainability having regard to the renewable energy's penetration level in production and consumption.

The mid-term perspective includes creating conditions for investors to be able to use RES more extensively for:

- Production and use of heating and cooling energy from RES;
- Production of energy from RES for individual domestic use, use in public buildings and at small enterprises in urbanized territories.
- Use of energy from RES in transport with a focus on electric vehicles and new-generation bio-fuels;
- Utilization of waste and residue from industrial enterprises for the production of energy.

Policies improving energy efficiency

The concept for common coordinated actions in the field of energy efficiency is to expand the market of energy-efficient services in the region, thereby attract investors' attention. The improvement of energy efficiency has a direct impact on the region's ecology.

The need to improve energy efficiency is the main priority of the governments in SEE region. It is realized through adoption of laws on energy efficiency and consistent transposition of EU Directives in national legislation, establishing of administrative structures implementing strategic measures on national level, creation of financial mechanisms, raising awareness of the citizens and the business etc.

The national parliaments' contributions outline a number of mechanisms that could streamline financial resources for the implementation of energy efficiency programmes. Providing funds to the investments by the government have been playing a catalyst role in formation and development of a market related to the energy efficiency services. Other financial mechanisms could be used for energy efficiency programs like low interest bank loans, incentives like tax reduction or subsidies. Energy Service Companies (ESCOs) might be the solution for implementing energy efficiency measures as the idea incorporates a win-win situation. However, the energy service market is not quite mature yet and more cooperation is needed in order to share best practices and experiences acquired. Last but not least special attention should be given to the social aspects of the energy efficiency measures which must constitute a policy tool for easing the energy burden of consumers struggling with high energy prices.

In that regard, a note could be made of the positive example of cooperation between the local and the regional administrations in South-Eastern Europe within the TRACE project which contributes to the sharing of know-how and good practices, to the creation of joint strategies and to the improvement of the efficiency of partnership on all levels which in turn will facilitate the implementation of the EU strategy for better efficiency in the construction and production sectors. In the immediate future, it is recommended that activities increasing energy efficiency be directed at developing territorially operative plans and at establishing specialized units in territorial public administrations in SEE, at creating a network of fora for energy investments, as well as at developing a methodology for education.

Building a common energy market and an energy structure will increase the energy efficiency of energy supplies due to the optimal allocation of energy flows. On the other hand, the spare capacity which ensures the safety of the interconnected energy system will be reduced, thus reducing the costs which impact electricity prices.

Tirana, 23.05.2015 Adopted

RESOLUTION

Reaffirming the principles enshrined in the *Charter of good neighborly relations, stability, security and cooperation*, signed in Bucharest in 2000, as the founding document of the SEECP;

Following the Declaration on the inauguration of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly adopted on May 10, 2014;

Guided by the Rules of Procedure of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly adopted on 10 May 2014 which establish the functioning of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly;

In accordance with the Work Programme 2014/2015 adopted on May 11, 2014 and the Report of the SEECP Parliamentary Dimension Working Group approved during the Inaugural Session on May 10, 2014;

Underlining that the liberalization of energy markets that will ensure competitive prices and consumer protection in accordance with EU legislation is an important goal for all the countries from SEECP;

Stressing the need for the effective application and implementation of the provisions included in the Third Energy Package of EU with a view to create an investment climate on the whole territory of Europe, based on clear market mechanisms and a stable and transparent European legal base;

Acknowledging the importance of the recently launched European Energy Union as an initiative aiming at integrating and consolidating the European energy framework and as a project with direct impact on the EU's neighborhood, including SEECP countries;

Taking account of the need for more investments in a strategic and a flexible infrastructure being a precondition for a single energy market, including the realization of sufficient interconnections between neighbouring countries with a view to the accessibility and maximum use of the existing energy infrastructure, which will lead to an increase in the security of supplies and a diversification of energy sources, prevention of energy isolation and connection of outermost regions of the regional energy market to the European continental networks;

Admitting that energy efficiency is an important priority which will have a serious multiplication effect on the economies of the SEECP countries, as a key factor in enhancing their competitiveness, reducing their energy dependence, creating new jobs and protecting the environment;

Having in mind the EU Directives and Regulations targeted to liberalization, integrity and transparency of the energy market, energy efficiency and use of renewable energy sources;

Deleted: ¶

Welcoming the activity of the Energy Community in SEE as a guarantee for the successful implementation of EU's directives and standards in the field of energy in SEE countries,

The General Committee on Economy, Infrastructure and Energy, which was convened in Sofia on March 21st, 2015:

1. **Calls on** SEECP countries to work towards ensuring the security of energy supplies for the region and for Europe, continuing the big energy projects in accordance with the European and international law and their economic efficiency;
2. **Underlines** the key importance of developing institutional cooperation between SEECP countries to the harmonization of policies with a view to building a single market and creating investment-friendly climate in the energy sector as an important condition for the sustainable development of the region;
3. **Calls on** the governments from SEECP to develop cross-border energy connections through the timely adoption and implementation of network codes and guidelines for electricity, and to continue their work on negotiating a mutually acceptable operative framework for the effective and non-discriminatory use and development of the capacity of gas pipelines and power grids in the region of SEE;
4. **Calls on** the countries from SEECP who are members of the EU or the Energy Community to transpose and implement the Third Energy Package and other directives in the field of energy;
5. **Strongly recommends** the activation of legislation towards promoting and supporting the introduction of renewable energy sources as the key solution in relation to the sustainable development and energy efficiency of SEE;
6. **Encourages** the countries from that region to work towards accomplishing the energy efficiency goals under Strategy 2020 by ensuring the proper implementation of the regulatory framework, access to funding and removal of existing barriers;
7. **Invites** the parliaments of SEECP PA to create, maintain and develop a network between the parliamentarians involved in the abovementioned, by activating cooperation in that field with parliamentarians of the European Parliament. This network shall assist in building up knowledge through screening of energy plans of the countries from SEECP, tracking the performance of energy efficiency policies and results-oriented ;
8. **Calls on** SEECP PA to assist in the undertaking of actions in European and regional energy policies, and for this purpose enhancing the close cooperation between the European, regional, national and local levels;
9. **Invites** the SEECP countries to share and apply the good practices specified in the report of the Economy, Infrastructure and Energy General Committee and enclosed contributions of the SEECP PA national parliaments;

**SEECF PA GENERAL COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION,
RESEARCH AND SCIENCE**

- Bucharest, Palace of Parliament, 26-27 February 2015 -

REPORT

on

**“PREVENTING THE SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF CHILDREN AT RISK:
AN INVESTMENT IN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT”**

Rapporteur: Ms. Gabriela PODAȘCĂ, Bucharest

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In 1996, the South-East European Cooperation Process was launched in Sofia with the adoption of the Declaration on Good-Neighborly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in the Balkans¹. One of the four priorities outlined in the Sofia Declaration stresses the importance of social and cultural development: Promotion of humanitarian cooperation by improving social and cultural communication between countries. This principle includes the need to coordinate our national policies in order to combat poverty and social exclusion.

2. Child poverty and social exclusion has been a worldwide phenomenon over the last few decades, Eurostat² figures estimating that more than one in four children are experiencing poverty and social exclusion. The study also confirms that children growing up in poverty and social exclusion are less likely to do well in school, be healthy and reach their full potential in life. By the time they reach adulthood, they are at a higher risk of becoming unemployed, poor and socially excluded. The reality is that children facing poverty are deprived of their fundamental rights as stated in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

3. We have recently celebrated twenty five years since the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on the 20th of November 1989. Since then, significant progress has been made concerning the rights of children, as many countries have used this convention to improve their national legislation and adopt new policies in this field. As a result, we can state that the lives of children worldwide have improved in the last 25 years. Nevertheless, millions of children throughout the world continue to be on the verge of social exclusion due to abuse, exploitation, low-quality housing, poor nutrition, inadequate, inaccessible or unaffordable healthcare and education, poverty and discrimination based on disability, gender, age, religion, ethnicity or residence status. Therefore, SEECP participating states should undertake additional measures and make a strong commitment to ensure the respect for children's rights, especially the most vulnerable groups.

4. In 2010, the European Commission launched the Europe 2020 Strategy³, a set of measures designed to help the member states through the financial crisis. Aiming to bring at least 20 million people out of poverty and social exclusion by 2020, the strategy is centered on the fight against poverty and social exclusion. Although many of the guidelines in the Europe 2020 Strategy have been implemented in EU member states, the social exclusion trend is not optimistic: between 2008 and 2012, the number of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion in Europe increased by almost 1 million, gaining about half a million just between 2011 and 2012⁴. Nevertheless, the target set by the Europe 2020 Strategy should be kept and, in order to reach it, national targets are necessary. It is important we address the manner in which SEECP participating states apply the measures suggested by the Europe 2020 Strategy and the European Commission Recommendation. Our aim is not to assess and prioritize the efforts made by SEECP participating states in implementing the Europe 2020 Strategy, but to learn from each other's experience and exchange examples of good practice.

5. Regardless of our status as EU members or non-members, child poverty and social exclusion has affected all countries especially in the context of the financial and economic crisis. The causes of this phenomenon vary according to the socio-economic climate of each country. The fact that some SEECP participating states are a part of the EU has offered us a series of useful tools, which have proven effective in combating child poverty. The best example is the EU Funds absorption, which

¹ 7th July, 1996

² Eurostat 2011, data available at: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Children_at_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion

³ More about the Europe 2020 Strategy can be found on the European Commission's website at: http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm

⁴ Save the Children, "Child Poverty and Social Exclusion in Europe: A matter of children's rights", 2014.

can greatly contribute to regional cohesion. KPMG's latest report on European funds⁵ shows that, after the 2007-2013 programming period, the ten Central and Eastern European countries under assessment⁶ contracted 98% of the allocated budget. These funds have boosted their economic performance⁷ and have significantly supported regional cohesion. We, as SEECP participating states, must share our experience regarding the effective utilization of EU support, so that the entire region develops.

6. When tackling children's rights, we should focus on the impact these measures have on the day-to-day life of children. According to the European Commission Synthesis Report "*Investing in children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage*"⁸, it is precisely this impact that has been insufficiently taken into account so far. The document also shows that it is exactly those countries with high rates of child poverty or social exclusion that haven't succeeded to protect children from the impact of the crisis. For example, in the midst of the economic and financial crisis, many states have adopted austerity measures and have cut down on services for children and their families. Such short term approaches conflict with the philosophy of investing in children stated by the European Commission's Recommendation⁹ and are oblivious of the principle of the "child's best interests" enshrined in the 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child (para.2) and reaffirmed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (art.3, para.1)¹⁰. Therefore, an effective implementation of child related policies in the SEECP region requires political will and a common vision, which places the rights of the child at the heart of decision-making. In this regard, it is essential that children's rights and needs are sheltered from austerity measures and any other policies with potentially negative effects.

7. The present report aims to go beyond a general framework, beyond simply stating the issues. In order to efficiently apply the rights perspective to policymaking, we must take the next step and not only understand the difficulties children face, but also find and implement adequate measures. As experience has shown, it is not an easy task to apply sustainable and well-coordinated measures. Our goal is to submit specific recommendations and integrate them into a regional and long-term approach.

8. In this context, during the constitutive meeting of the SEECP PA Committee for Social Development, Education, Research and Science held on May 11, 2014, it was decided to focus on "Preventing the social exclusion of children at risk: an investment in regional development" as the main theme of the Meeting, to be held in Bucharest, on 26-27 February 2015. Contributions to the Report were received from the national delegations of _____. Reference material was also obtained from the official websites of EU, Council of Europe, UNICEF and other relevant international organizations.

II. THE SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF CHILDREN AT RISK – AN OVERVIEW OF THE SEECP REGION

1. The financial and economic crisis has had a disproportionate impact on children in the SEECP region, with austerity measures cutting down support for children and their families. As highlighted in the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) 2014 Report¹¹, the national governments' decision to

⁵ KPMG, "EU Funds in Central and Eastern Europe – Progress Report 2007-2013", 2014, available at <http://www.kpmg.com/SI/en/IssuesAndInsights/ArticlesPublications/Documents/EU-Funds-in-Central-and-Eastern-Europe.pdf>

⁶ Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia.

⁷ EU SCF, accounting for 11,3% up to 25% of their annual GDP

⁸ European Commission Synthesis Report "*Investing in children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage - A study of national policies*", Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, April 2014.

⁹ Commission Recommendation "*Investing in children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage*" published in February 2013 as part of the Social Investment Package for Growth and Cohesion (SIP).

¹⁰ Convention on the Rights of the Child, November 20, 1989, art.3, para.1.

¹¹ European Public Health Alliance, "*Growing up in the unhappy shadow of the economic crisis: Mental health and well-being of the European child and adolescent population*", November 2014, available at http://www.ephah.org/IMG/pdf/EPHA_Report_Mental_Health_Child_and_Adolescent_Population_Economic_Crisis.pdf

cut rather than invest in early years has turned children into the “unintentional victims of the failings of the political and economic system.”¹² As a result of austerity policies and recession, the trend of increased social exclusion continues, especially in the newer EU member states. Children are particularly vulnerable to deprivation of their specific needs. They cannot be regarded as full economic agents exercising consumer sovereignty: they are not able to secure their own income/resources until a certain age and they are not sovereign in making consumption decisions. They are usually the weaker parties in the household. Moreover, for the fulfillment of their basic needs they have to rely more than adults on the production of goods and services by public authorities.

2. UNICEF latest Global report¹³ show that roughly 18,000 children under 5 years old die every day, most of whom located in areas that are cut off from services because of poverty or geography. These children are deprived of their fundamental right to survive and develop, but many more are exposed to poverty, malnutrition, poor health, unsuitable home environment, lack of education, having their cognitive, motor and social-emotional development impaired. Overall, studies show that children are the most vulnerable parties in the household, with risk-of-poverty rates higher than any other age group.

According to the Report Card issued by UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre in 2014 the economic crisis and recession made that over 76.5 million children live in poverty in the 41 most affluent countries. The recession has hit young people extremely hard, with the NEET (not in education, employment or training) rate rising dramatically in many countries. In the EU, 7.5 million young people (almost the population of Switzerland) were NEET in 2013 – nearly a million more than in 2008. Moreover, recent surveys¹⁴ reveal that almost 27 million children in Europe are at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

3. As far as the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy goes, most member states haven't granted due importance to the social inclusion and well-being of children. In most cases, National Reform Programs have focused on educational disadvantages and parents' participation in the labour market, not paying enough attention to income support and access to services.

4. Children experience different levels of social exclusion and are faced with a wide range of difficulties associated with this phenomenon. Some are more affected than others and this calls for a clear overview of the main categories of vulnerable children:

- Children growing up with a lone parent. According to Eurostat, 18% of children growing up with a single parent were severely materially deprived¹⁵.
- Children living in households with a high risk of poverty. Studies¹⁶ show that 30 % of households with two adults with three or more dependent children were at risk of poverty or social exclusion.
- Children from households with migrant background. In 2011, one child in three with a migrant background was at risk of poverty, according to Eurostat¹⁷.
- Street and homeless children. According to global reports, there are around 100 million children living in the streets today.

¹² Ibidem, page 4.

¹³ UNICEF, “*The State of the World's Children 2014 In Numbers: Every Child Counts*”, New York, 2014.

¹⁴ 2013 Eurostat data

¹⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Children_at_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion#Single_parents_and_large_households_with_dependent_children.C2.A0

¹⁶ Ibidem.

¹⁷ Eurostat Newsrelease, February 2013, available at:

http://www.google.ro/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CCkQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fec.europa.eu%2Frapid%2Fpress-release_STAT-13-28_en.pdf&ei=ENG2VLKwKsH5yQOOx4BQ&usg=AFQjCNF29cOgmWeA2yCrI_Jm4unawh_qbA&bvm=bv.83640239,d.bGQ

- Children with disabilities. According to the Global Burden of Disease, there are approximately 95 million children with disabilities (5.1% of all children), 13 million of them with “severe disability”.
- Children from minority and ethnic groups. For example, according to a United Nations Development Program published in 2003, infant mortality rates among the Roma populations were double compared to those of the non-Roma.
- Children at risk in the rural area. Reports¹⁸ show that poverty in rural areas has the greatest impact on children, especially in Eastern countries.

5. Children are not to be regarded in isolation, but in a family context, in a social environment. In order to better address children at risk, it should be tackled from a multitude of angles: poverty, social services, education, work and family policies, healthcare, environment and housing, children’s participation. A successful approach is finding a balance between universal and targeted interventions, sustainability and participatory processes. Recommendations: employment policies for parents, tax-benefit systems, quality child care, education, protection of children’s rights, equal opportunities and family policies.

For example, addressing early childhood and supporting families in high-risk conditions can create lasting benefits in several areas: child development, health, and protection. Giving adequate attention to adolescents and young people can also help the transition to active life and prevent the risks that are today widespread among them.

III. POLICY RESPONSES

The state plays a critical role in creating an environment to fulfill children’s rights. The best course of action as suggested by the Save the Children Child Rights Governance Initiative¹⁹ is to develop context-specific, child-sensitive policies based on evidence and which address precise areas where children’s rights are affected. According to Article 4 of the UNCRC, signatory countries are bound to undertake all measures in order to respect children’s rights.²⁰

1. POVERTY. Research shows that poverty is the greatest threat to children’s well being (physical, mental and social dimensions). Taking into consideration the fact that the unemployment rate of the EU28 has increased from 7.2% in 2007 to 11% in 2013, poverty among children has become a pressing issue. The numbers revealed by the 2014 European Public Health Alliance Report²¹ are quite alarming: in 2008, approximately 9.5 million children in 30 European countries were living in severe material deprivation, but only 4 years later, in 2012, this number had reached 11.1 million.

A child growing up in poverty and more likely to become socially excluded adults, trapped in a cycle that is frequently passed on to the next generation. Policies to alleviate child poverty are nothing short of a social investment, which will lead to economic growth and social cohesion. Experience has proven that the benefits of investing in children services are higher than the benefits of most public projects.²²

Recommended course of action:

¹⁸ POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN RURAL AREAS, FINAL STUDY REPORT, European Commission, 2008.

¹⁹ Report commissioned by Save the Children. Child Rights Governance Initiative, “*Investment in children*”, November 2011

²⁰ Convention on the Rights of the Child, November 20, 1989, art.4.

²¹ European Public Health Alliance Report, “*Growing up in the unhappy shadow of the economic crisis: Mental health and well-being of the European child and adolescent population*”, 2014, available at http://www.ephpa.org/IMG/pdf/EPHA_Report_Mental_Health_Child_and_Adolescent_Population_Economic_Crisis.pdf

²² Rolnick A. and Grunewald R., “*Early Childhood Development with a High Public Return*”, Minneapolis Federal Reserve Bank. 2003.

- Setting up a minimum social services package for children at risk and their families, complementary to the social benefits offered to them;
- Developing integrated community services. A successful model of integrated community based social services is the Minimum Package of Services for children at risk, which enables access to basic medical, education and social assistance services. Local authorities are encouraged to have a social worker, a community nurse and a school counselor in every community. These professionals must work together to identify vulnerable children, assess their specific needs, provide support and counseling and monitor their progress. The Minimum Package of Services is cost-effective and also offers more children at risk the opportunity to have their needs met;
- Introducing and maintaining universal and adequate support schemes for children and families that would include a balanced mix of prevention and early intervention services and of remedial interventions as described in the Minimum Package of Services;
- Setting up a financing mechanism for the integrated community services which ensures maximum coverage and offers children maximum benefits;
- Ensure adequate human capacity in order to implement prevention and support measures for vulnerable children and their families;
- Granting social benefits adequate to the specific need of vulnerable children: single parent and large households, children with disabilities, children living in poverty, children from rural areas, children from the child protection system, children with substance abuse problems, children at conflict with the law, street and homeless children, children from Roma communities, children with parents working abroad;
- Enabling children's access to the services and benefits they are entitled to by offering them adequate information and support.

2. EDUCATION is essential for ending the intergenerational transmission of poverty. According to the Save the Children 2014 Report *"Child Poverty and Social Exclusion in Europe: A matter of children's rights"*, 13% of children in the EU leave school after lower secondary level, in some countries the percentage of early school leavers reaching an alarming 25%.

The European Education and Training 2020²³ has set an optimistic goal for 2020: at least 95% of children under the age for starting compulsory primary education should participate in early childhood education. In order to reach this aim, member states should focus on:

- Making education and training systems more inclusive at all levels;
- Reducing school drop-out to less than 10% early leavers by 2020;
- Supporting children with special needs within mainstream schooling;
- Enhancing the quality of early childhood education and care: staff training and preparedness to understand and meet the individual or special needs of all children;
- Integrated educational approaches (social skills and child's participation) are more successful in the development of children's cognitive skills than models based on reproduction of knowledge;
- Complementary, we need to invest in the modernization of school facilities, as well as the training of teaching staff;
- Reducing the negative impact of cutbacks in education budgets on children from poor backgrounds;
- Addressing regional disparities and focusing on the disadvantaged groups.

3. CHILDCARE AND WORK-LIFE RECONCILIATION. In order to stimulate parental employment and therefore lower poverty rates, we need to take into account both active labour market policies and the quality of childcare (availability and affordability). Governments should support several childcare options and take measures to support women who wish to enter and remain

²³ http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/general_framework/ef0016_en.htm

in the labour market. Also, the cost of childcare is crucial for work-life reconciliation²⁴, often generating disincentives to work, especially for lone parents and second earners on low income. Therefore, a reduction in childcare costs should be accompanied with additional incentives for second earners. Also, employment law on parental leave should allow both parents to choose how to balance family and working life. Regarding the large discrepancy regarding parental leave income replacement policies for men and women, as suggested by the European Social Network 2013 Analysis²⁵, we should encourage the employees who have taken parental leave to continue or enhance their pension contributions to compensate for their loss of routine contributions.

Other possible improvements as recommended by the European Commission in its Synthesis Report *"Investing in children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage - A study of national policies"* (2014):

- Targeted and outreach programs for single parents, jobless couples, parents from disadvantaged, migrant or ethnic minority backgrounds;
- Supporting parents' participation in employment or training programs;
- Assistance and back-up services for parents from disadvantaged backgrounds;
- Improving access to information about programs;
- Developing services which enable balancing family and working life.

4. HEALTH is a determining factor for children's future and life chances. As reported by the World Health Organization²⁶, more than 160 000 children in the European Region die every year before the age of five, 50% of them in the first month of life. Although there has been great progress in recent years, disparities between and within countries are still an issue: countries with the highest rate for children under five years is 25 times higher than that in countries with the lowest rate.

As stated by the 2015-2020 World Health Organization *European Child and Adolescents Health Strategy*²⁷, countries should follow three major objectives:

- Promoting governance, partnerships and intersectoral cooperation (e.g. the Minimum Package Services);
- Strengthening people-centered health systems;
- Addressing social determinants of health and the equality gap for children, adolescents, parents and caregivers.

We should also coordinate our effort towards improving the access, affordability and quality of healthcare and the availability of equipment and health professionals. For example, free preventive and community-based health care should be available for every child and family: regular check-ups and home visits can identify potential health problems early on. In addition, an important investment must be made in public health prevention programs such as vaccination promotion, parenting support and child nutrition programs.

This constitutes a general plan of action, suited for a nationwide implementation. On the other hand, the disadvantaged communities and groups should benefit of outreach services suites for their needs (e.g. special initiatives for immigrants and ethnic minorities to access health services).

5. PARTICIPATION. We must support children's right to leisure, play and participation. All of the above are vital for the child's overall development because they enhance self-confidence, as well as social and civic skills. To this means, we must create more opportunities for children and especially for disadvantaged children to get involved: inserting such activities into school curricula and after-school-activities provided by the formal education.

²⁴ The European Platform for Investing in Children, Barbara Janta, "Caring for children in Europe", 2014

²⁵ The European Social Network, *"Investing in Children: ESN analysis of the European Recommendation"*, Working paper, April 2013

²⁶ <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/Life-stages/child-and-adolescent-health/child-and-adolescent-health>

²⁷ World Health Organization, *"Investing in children: the European child and adolescent health strategy 2015-2020"*, September 2014

Furthermore, children's participation in all areas of policy-making, which has an impact on them, should be promoted. As a general rule, the voice of the children must be heard in all decisions concerning their future. For example, the European Social Network acknowledges that children in public care and involved in child protection cases should have access to independent legal representation²⁸.

IV. SEECP FRAMEWORK

1. In order to develop cooperation among the SEECP Member States in the field of combating social exclusion for children, the first step is to exchange information and best practices in the field. Therefore, we welcome any example of social policy innovations that have proven to be successful.

2. We need to enhance our policy coordination if we want to see considerable effects (using an instrument like the EU Open Method of Coordination²⁹ in the field of social protection and social inclusion).

3. The major obstacle towards a fruitful cooperation is the lack of integrated and centralized databases on social exclusion in the SEECP region. Therefore, one of our immediate goals should be the harmonization and exchange of Social Statistical Data.

4. The SEECP participating states, which can access EU funds, need to invest more effort into spending funds to support social inclusion. SEECP participating states are advised to share recent developments and offer advice to non-EU states regarding successful programs.

5. Participating states are encouraged to consolidate the partnership with civil society in order to support more effectively the implementation of social policy reforms.

6. In all participating states the risk of social exclusion for children has been considerably aggravated by the global economic and financial crisis. Years after its outburst, we are still experiencing high unemployment rates, rising poverty levels, insufficient social protection, the gap between rich and poor families has widened, all of which have translated into a decline in child well-being.

V. CONCLUSIONS

1. A collective approach is needed to address the systemic nature of the challenge. While it is every state's responsibility to implement sustainable measures, we need a solid strategy and coordinated implementation.

2. SEECP participating states are advised to include the fight against child poverty and social exclusion, as well as the promotion of child well-being, in the objectives of all relevant government departments and agencies.

3. In developing, applying and monitoring strategies to reduce child poverty and social exclusion, a useful tool have proven to be the cross-governmental coordinating arrangements (e.g. a committee of officials from across ministries/different levels of government) which involve all relevant ministries and agencies.³⁰

²⁸ European Social Network, *ibid*.

²⁹ The Open Method of Coordination (OMC) is used by EU Member States to support the definition, implementation and evaluation of their social policies and to develop their mutual cooperation. It is a tool of governance based on common objectives and indicators. The OMC process is structured as three-year cycles, leading to national reports which are synthesised by the Commission and the Council in a joint report.

³⁰ Integrated multi-dimensional strategies in the European Commission Synthesis Report "*Investing in children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage - A study of national policies*", Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, April 2014.

4. Programs evaluation in several countries and national policies evaluations have been valuable lessons in addressing the risk of social exclusion for children at a regional level. To better understand the evolution of the phenomenon, committee members are encouraged to collect and analyze relevant data regarding the situation of children and also to identify focal points which require policy attention. To that end, we should monitor the specified issues and report regularly on progress.

5. We need to find a balance between universal and targeted measures. Universal measures which address all children have the main advantage that they can reach a high number of children simultaneously. On the other hand, targeted measures help the most vulnerable of children and offer tailor-made solutions to specific problems which would otherwise be overlooked in the big picture.

RESOLUTION

Reaffirming the principles enshrined in the *Charter of good neighborly relations, stability, security and cooperation*, signed in Bucharest in 2000, as the founding document of the SEECP;

Following the Declaration on the inauguration of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly adopted on May 10, 2014;

Guided by the Rules of Procedure of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly adopted on 10 May 2014 which establish the functioning of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly;

In accordance with the Work Programme 2014/2015 adopted on May 11, 2014 and the Report of the SEECP Parliamentary Dimension Working Group approved during the Inaugural Session on May 10, 2014;

Recalling that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (adopted in New York on 20 November 1989) and its Optional Protocols are the standard in the promotion and protection of the rights of the child, containing a comprehensive set of international legal standards for the protection and well-being of children;

Emphasizing that all the SEECP participating states have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and therefore have clear legal obligations to protect and fulfill the children's rights within their jurisdictions;

Taking note of the General Comment No 14 (2013) of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child which enshrines the children's rights to have their best interests regarded as a primary consideration;

Taking into consideration the EU Agenda for the Rights of the Child, adopted in February 2011, which reinforces the full commitment of the EU to promote, protect and fulfill the rights of the child in all relevant EU policies and actions;

Recognizing that the social and cultural development (promotion of humanitarian cooperation) is one of the four priorities stated in the Declaration on Good-Neighborly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in the Balkans signed in 1996 in Sofia;

Emphasizing that all the rights of the child (including the best interests of the child, the child's right to life, survival and development, non-discrimination, the child's right to an opinion) should be fulfilled without discrimination (race, religion, residence status, sex, ethnic origin, disability etc);

Concerned that approximately 27 million children in Europe are at risk of poverty or social exclusion and more than one in four children are experiencing poverty and social exclusion;

Deeply concerned that more than 160 000 children in the European Region die every year before the age of five, 50% of them in the first month of life;

Acknowledging that the financial and economic crisis has had a disproportionate impact on children, with austerity measures cutting down support for children and their families;

Recognizing the significant progress that has been made concerning the rights of children since the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, with many countries having improved their national legislation and implemented new policies in this field;

Welcoming the Europe 2020 Strategy launched by the European Commission in 2010, which aims to bring at least 20 million people out of poverty and social exclusion by 2020;

Convinced that, while it is every state's responsibility to implement sustainable measures, we need a collective approach to the systemic nature of social exclusion among children;

Stressing the need to find a balance between universal and targeted measures – namely, policies that address all children must be accompanied by tailor-made solutions for the most vulnerable children;

Aware that the social exclusion of children calls for both immediate action and long-term solutions - early intervention weakens the cycle of poverty and deprivation, while investing in children prevents negative social outcomes.

The General Committee on Social Development, Education, Research and Science, which was convened in Bucharest, on February 27, 2015:

1. **Calls on** participating states to support the transition from institutional to community-based services for children, while ensuring their compliance with the standards of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;
2. **Calls on** the participating states to explicitly consider children's rights (non-discrimination, the child's right to life, the best interests of the child, survival and development, respect for the child's right to an opinion) as a priority when setting the budget, programming and implementing national, regional and cohesion policies;
3. **Invites** participating states to enhance their cooperation with UNICEF and other relevant international and regional organizations during the elaboration, implementation and monitoring of children-related policies and legislation;
4. **Calls on** the SEECP participating states to monitor and report on the implementation of the European Commission's recommendation entitled 'Investing in Children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage';
5. **Encourages** the SEECP participating states to take the necessary measures in order to ratify all the Optional Protocols to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;
6. **Stresses** the need for the participating states with above-average rates of child poverty to set national targets and monitor progress within each vulnerable category of children;

7. **Invites** all participating states to consider providing adequate resources in order to ensure access of all children to quality services (childcare, education, health) and participation of the children in matters which concern them;
8. **Calls on** SEEC member parliaments to constantly review and develop the national legal frameworks in the area of child protection and children's rights, in line with the relevant international and regional commitments and with a view of harmonizing legislation that addresses cross borders issues; **invites** parliaments to see to it that national budgets respond to the needs of children and reflect their interests;
9. **Highlights** the fact that reducing the social exclusion of children can only be achieved through the development of public services which are accessible to all;
10. **Encourages** the participating states to share best practices and examples of social policy innovations that have proven to be successful in reducing social exclusion among children;
11. **Recommends** participating states which are members of the EU to share their positive experience in absorbing EU funds with non-EU states in the SEEC region;
12. **Calls on** participating states to include the fight against child poverty and social exclusion, as well as the promotion of child well-being, in the objectives of all relevant government departments and agencies;
13. **Underlines** the key role played by social partners, civil society and local authorities in promoting children's rights and encourages participating states to consolidate this partnership in order to more effectively implement social policy reforms;
14. **Strongly recommends** that central and local authorities in participating states find ways to increase children's participation in all matters affecting them, in accordance with their age and maturity;
15. **Advises** participating states to raise awareness about the risk of social exclusion children face and to promote children's rights in order to increase public knowledge and understanding;
16. **Urges** participating states to harmonize their statistical data on social exclusion in an integrated and centralized database by: collecting and analyzing relevant data, identifying the main areas which require policy attention and monitoring progress;
17. **Calls** for more detailed impact assessments in order to determine the potential effects of policies on children's rights.

23.05.2015 / TIRANA Adopted

**Work Programme 2015/2016
of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly**

- one or two meetings of each of the three General Committees¹.
- two meetings of the Standing Committee to be held in the country holding the 2015/2016 SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office: one meeting during Autumn 2015 and one meeting during Spring 2016.
- one Plenary Session to be organized in May/June 2016 by the country holding the 2015/2016 SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office.

¹ *Technical note:*

- *to be organized at least two months prior to the next Plenary Session in order to provide in due time their adopted documents to all delegations as following:*
 - o *the Parliament from Sofia shall provide all necessary arrangements for the organization of the meeting of the General Committee on Economy, Infrastructure and Energy;*
 - o *the Parliament from Belgrade shall provide all necessary arrangements for the organization of the meeting of the General Committee on Justice, Home Affairs and Security Cooperation;*
 - o *the Parliament from Tirana shall provide all necessary arrangements for the organization of the meeting of the General Committee on Social Development, Education, Research and Science.*

**Amendments to SEECF PA Rules of Procedure
proposed by the Standing Committee**

1.

At Rule 11, paragraph 3 we are proposing the following adjustment:

"Each national parliament shall nominate at least one deputy member in each of the General Committees. The presence of at least two-thirds **half** of the members nominated by the national delegations shall constitute the quorum for the General Committee sessions."

Motivation:

- a) *within the present Rules of Procedures (RoP) the quorum is related to the number of national delegations (see Rule 5, paragraph 4) and the vote is per delegation (see Rule 10, paragraph 1), therefore the second part of the deleted formulation may create ambiguities;*
- b) *for the sake of the Committee meetings, having in view the many obvious reasons that might not allow the participation of a national delegation (as election periods, political turbulences etc), we propose to diminish the actual very high quorum which can seriously endanger the possibility of a committee to advance proposals to the Sessions. In fact, if a parliament would not have the possibility to be represented at a Committee meeting to vote on a provision included in a draft Document, it has further on the possibility to block or adjust that provision during the Session which will consider the so proposed draft Document as advanced by the respective Committee.*

2.

At Rule 11, paragraph 4 we are proposing the following addition:

"The Chairperson of a General Committee shall be elected from among its members, for a one year term, by a simple majority of votes cast in a secret ballot. **If due to obvious reasons, the so elected Chairperson cannot exercise its full powers, his / her national parliament will designate in due time another member of that parliament to take over ad-interim the Chairmanship of that Committee for a Committee meeting or until the end of that term.**"

Motivation: Due to obvious reasons, as the case of early elections or illness the Chairperson of a Committee may lose its mandate in his/ her national parliament. This addition is reflecting the spirit of the present Rules which stipulates that the respective parliament is assuming certain responsibilities for that Committee during that Chairmanship term. At the same time this formulation is covering the present transitional provisions (Rule 17) without making use of them as these rules may change.

3.

At Rule 11, paragraph 8 we are proposing the following adjustment:

"With the exception of the specific procedures detailed within the present Rules of Procedures for the General Committees, the other procedures set out for the Plenary Session shall also apply with regard to the work of the General Committees and Ad-hoc Working Groups."

Motivation:

- a) *there may be specific procedures shaped for the General Committees, as the case of the one proposed above, that are not similar to the ones used in the Sessions, therefore with this proposal we are avoiding possible conflicts between different Rules;*

b) *the procedures in the Ad hoc Working Groups shall much better follow the ones adopted for the General Committees (election, quorum, decisions, substitute members, responsibility of the national parliament that has the Chairmanship of that Ad hoc Working Group etc) and not the ones used for the Session and in this respect we are proposing below a new text (see point 4).*

4.

At the end of Rule 11, after the present paragraph 9 to add the following new text:

"The procedures set out for the General Committees shall also apply with regard to the work of the Ad hoc Working Groups with the exception of the quorum for the decision making within the Ad hoc Working Groups which shall be two thirds of the national delegations"

Motivation: described at point 3 b) to which is to be added that due to the nature of the issues involving the Ad hoc Working Groups (operational, institutional, procedural, all directly related to the overall function of the Parliamentary Assembly) it is deemed that the quorum should remain unchanged, namely to a two thirds majority, as more representative and more broadly reflecting the Parliamentary Assembly's views.

5.

At Rule 4, paragraph 5, we are proposing the following adjustment:

The General Committees shall hold **short meetings for electing their Chairpersons in the margins of** ~~during the annual Sessions in the country holding the Chairmanship-in-Office or~~ **other regular meetings** in one of the SEECF Participating States.

Motivation: this is in line with the one year term mandate specified at Rule 11, paragraph 4.

6. Supplementary **new Rule** proposed after the present Rule 10:

"All documents mentioned at Rule 9, paragraph 11, put forth for the adoption on the occasion of the Plenary Sessions, the Standing Committees, the General Committees and the Ad hoc Working Groups shall be distributed to all national delegations at least 15 days prior the respective body meeting.

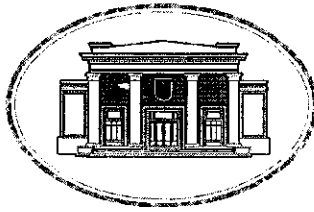
Amendments to the before mentioned draft documents shall be distributed to all national delegations at least 7 days prior the respective body meeting.

Any present delegation at the respective body meeting may use the right to procedurally block the consideration of any amendment received after the above mentioned deadline."

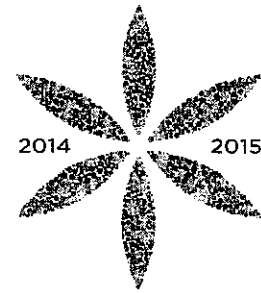
Motivation: for improving the level of trust by avoiding situations when members of the delegations may not have the possibility to adapt in short to new draft documents and amendments.

7. The last paragraph of the Rules of Procedure shall be deleted as it becomes obsolete.

~~"These Rules of Procedure will be revised not later than 2015 including the provisions concerning the secretariat."~~



SEECP ALBANIAN CHAIRMANSHIP
PARLIAMENTARY DIMENSION
REGIONAL OWNERSHIP IN ACTION



Tirana, 23.05.2015 Adopted

REPORT
of the South-East European Cooperation Process Parliamentary
Assembly
Ad - Hoc Working Group for the 2nd Plenary Session of the
SEECP Parliamentary Assembly

The host country took over the Chairmanship-in-Office of the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP) as agreed during the meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs held on **25th of October 2013**, in Bucharest.

In compliance with the Decision by the Parliament of the country holding the Chairmanship-in-Office, Mr. Ilir Meta was designated as Chairman-in-Office of the Parliamentary Assembly (PA) of the SEECP on 15th of May 2014.

The activities supported by the Chairmanship-in-Office were based on the following major aspects arising from the documents adopted during the Inaugural session of the SEECP Speakers held on 9th-11th of May 2014 in Bucharest:

- Rules of Procedures (RoP) of the SEECP PA adopted in Bucharest;
- Report of the Working Group adopted in Bucharest, which stated that will build a new ad hoc working group which will deal with the Rules of the Secretariat, budget and the seat of the secretariat of the SEECP PA.

Mr. Ilir Meta sent, on **the 10th of October 2014**, a letter to the Speakers of Parliaments of the SEECP participants informing them about the main commitments, priorities and envisaged activities during one-year Chairmanship-in-Office of the SEECP PA.

Starting from this moment, the Chairmanship-in-Office carried out many activities - including, various bilateral meetings with other speakers of the SEECP national parliaments, several correspondences, a meeting with the high representatives of all diplomatic missions of the SEECP participating states in Tirana - in order to inform about the main priorities of the Albanian C-i-O and at the same time to inform them about the activities of the Chairmanship-in-Office.

On 10th of May 2014 the Inaugural Session held in Bucharest elected Mr. Taulant Balla as Chairperson of the SEECP PA Ad Hoc Working Group.

During the mid of October we sent the practical documents, as well as the Ad Hoc Working Group documents, calling for amendments and proposals related to the 1st Ad hoc Working Group meeting. The major draft documents to be amended were documents from the previous Chairmanship-in-Office.

The Ad Hoc Working Group held its 1st meeting, on the 7th-8th of November 2014, in Tirana in the premises of the Albanian Parliament.

In the second part of December 2014, the Chairmanship-in-Office announced to all parliaments of the SEECP participants the dates for the next meeting of the Ad hoc Working Group and the 2nd Plenary Session of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly to be held in Tirana from 22-23 May 2015.

The 1st Ad Hoc Working Group decided that the Troika should draft a budget to present it to the 2nd Ad Hoc Working Group. It has been decided, as well, that all the national delegations should submit a letter to the C-i-O concerning the Seat of the Secretariat. The invitation for the 2nd Ad Hoc Working Group was submitted to all national delegations from the Chairperson of the Ad Hoc Working Group.

The Ad Hoc Working Group held its **2nd meeting on the 17th-18th of April 2015** in Tirana in the premises of the Albanian Parliament.

The Ad Hoc Working Group held its 3rd **meeting on the 22nd of May 2015** in Tirana in the premises of the Albanian Parliament.

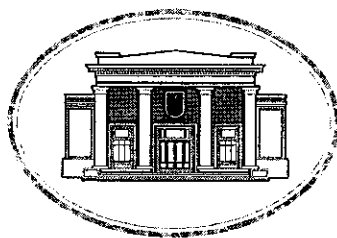
During the three meetings held under the current Chairmanship-in-Office of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly, the Ad Hoc Working Group adopted the following documents to be submitted for consideration to the 2nd Plenary Session of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly:

- The draft Rules of SEECP PA Secretariat, as the basic document that, once adopted, can guarantee the efficiency of the functioning of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly. During this process this document was aligned with the provisions of the documents drafted by the previous Romanian C-i-O in Bucharest;
- The present Report of Ad Hoc Working Group.

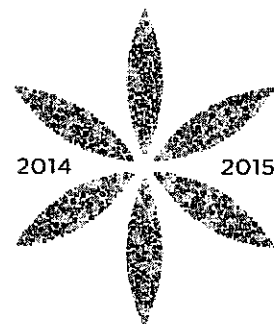
During its mentioned meetings the Group also decided on the following main aspects:

- agreed on a consolidated draft Rules of the SEECP PA Secretariat;

- the Ad hoc WG gathered the following positions concerning the seat of the Secretariat:
 - for Ankara proposal: 8 SEECP Participants
 - for Sofia proposal: 3 SEECP Participants
 - no position: 1 SEECP Participant



SEECP ALBANIAN CHAIRMANSHIP
PARLIAMENTARY DIMENSION
REGIONAL OWNERSHIP IN ACTION



Tirana, 25.05.2015 Adopted

Rules of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly Secretariat

1. Main features

The Secretariat of The SEECP Parliamentary Assembly, is the administrative and technical body and a focal point of communication among the country holding the Chairmanship-in-Office, the Troika, the Standing Committee, the Secretaries of the national delegations and the working bodies of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly.

The Secretariat shall consist of a Secretary General, General Committees' Secretaries, Operational Manager and staff.

2. Functions

The Secretariat shall:

- Support the CiO in the organization of the annual Sessions.
- Support the CiO in the organization of the meetings of the General Committees.
- Organize, in close cooperation with the CiO, the meetings of the Standing Committee.
- Prepare, in cooperation with the CiO and the secretaries of the national delegations, the initial draft documents, meeting files, notes for the Chair.
- Forward the opinions, resolutions, recommendations, reports and other advisory instruments to the national parliaments and to all interested institutions and organizations after the closure of each annual Session.

- Prepare, in consultation and close cooperation with the CiO, the proposals for the draft Work Programme and the Budget.
- Prepare, in cooperation with the CiO, Annual Report on the activities of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly;
- Develop and implement the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly communication policy in order to enhance the visibility of its activities;
- On behalf of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly support, promote, establish, maintain and coordinate the relations with national, intergovernmental, regional and international institutions and organizations; further contacts with NGO, initiatives, academic and research institutions;
- Be responsible for the information support of the activities of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly which it coordinates, organizes or carries out;
- Organize and host training programs, seminars, workshops for members of parliaments and for the parliamentary staff in the framework of the Working Programme and the Budget;
- Manage and supervise the implementation of the budget and the financial regulations, including the programming, control and internal auditing of all budgetary operation
- Have the capacity to conclude contracts, to acquire and dispose of moveable and immoveable property and to institute legal proceedings;

3. Structure

1. Secretary General (1)

Nominated by: the national delegations

Approved by: the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly

Term of office: 3 year / may be nominated for another term

The National Delegations shall forward to the Secretariat their proposals on candidacies for the post of the Secretary General not later than 3 months before the annual Session of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly.

Functions:

The Secretary General shall:

- Endorse administration of the Secretariat and responsibility for exercising its intrinsic or delegated functions;

- Be responsible to the President and to the SEECPP Parliamentary Assembly;
- Maintain operational contacts and direct the preparation of the annual Session, the meetings of the Standing Committee, the meetings of the General Committees and the Ad hoc Working Groups;
- Prepare each year a draft Working Programme, together with a draft Budget;
- Submit an annual report to the SEECPP Parliamentary Assembly
Following the SEECPP Parliamentary Assembly's approval, the annual report shall be circulated among the Members of the SEECPP Parliamentary Assembly, and also forwarded, for information purposes;
- Have the capacity to conclude contracts, to acquire and dispose of movable and immovable property, and to institute legal proceedings;
- Be responsible for the execution of the budget and administration of its assets.

2. General Committees' Secretaries (3)

Proposed by: the national delegations

Nominated by: the Standing Committee

Approved by: the SEECPP Parliamentary Assembly

Term of office: 3 year / may be nominated for another term

Functions:

The secretaries shall:

- Provide the necessary background documentation for the annual Sessions of the SEECPP Parliamentary Assembly and prepare reports on the priority topics on its Agenda;
- Assist the organisation of the Committee meetings and prepare the draft agendas, draft minutes, draft working papers and files;
- Provide technical assistance to the Chair and the Committee members;
- Prepare briefs and documentation;

3. Operational Manager (Head) (1)

Nominated by: National delegations.

Approved by: the Standing Committee

Term of office: 3 years / may be nominated for another term.

Functions:

The Operational Manager shall:

- Assist and coordinate the preparation of the annual Sessions, the meetings of the Standing Committee and of the sectoral committees;
- Assist and coordinate the preparation and implementation of the Working Programme;
- Provide to the Secretary General the assistance necessary for the execution of his/her duty of coordinating the work of the SEECF Parliamentary Assembly and its Committees;
- assist the coordination with national parliaments and the contacts with regional initiatives and international organizations;
- Direct the administrative work of the Secretariat;
- Control the financial commitments and the budget of the Secretariat according to a joint financial regulation adopted by the SEECF Parliamentary Assembly
- Take part in the preparation of the annual report and the financial statement.

4. Administrative Assistant (1)

Nominated by: Secretary General.

Approved by: the Standing Committee of the SEECF PA Parliamentary Assembly.

Term of office: 3 years / may be nominated for another term.

Functions:

The Administrative Assistant shall:

- Arrange, with the national delegations to the SEECF Parliamentary Assembly and national parliaments, the necessary contacts for the organisation of the activities of the Secretary General and the

Operational Manager, particularly with the national governments, regional and international organizations.

- Classify and archive the documents of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly
- Maintain the website of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly
- Take part in the preparation, organization and holding of the meetings of the Standing Committee, of the Secretariat with the national coordinators and of the Ad hoc Working Groups, as well as of other events;
- Be responsible for the technical equipment of the office of the Secretariat;
- Support the work of the Operational Manager.

5. Accountant (1)

Nominated by: National delegations.

Approved by: the Standing Committee

Term of office: 3 years / may be nominated for another term.

Functions:

The Accountant shall:

- See to the proper application and execution of the budget of the Secretariat;
- Take part in the preparation of the annual financial statement.

4. Budget

- The functioning of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly and the Secretariat is co-financed by the participating countries.
- Each Member Parliament shall make an annual financial contribution in accordance with a scale approved by the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly.

- The budget may also include donations and grants, funds raised from international projects, own resources and income.
- The first annual budget will be approved by the SEECPA General Assembly based on the draft budget and contribution criteria provided by the Ad hoc Working Group.

5. Seat

- The SEECP PA Secretariat shall be seated inin accordance with the Host Country Agreement between the SEECP PA and the Government offor the Secretariat of the South East European Cooperation Procces Parliamentary Assembly.