

UNESCO's contribution to the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 56/110 on "Economic assistance to the Eastern European States affected by the developments in the Balkans" UNESCO has continued to provide assistance to the Eastern European States affected by the developments in the Balkans. The Director General convened a High-Level Conference on Strengthening Cooperation in South-East Europe (Paris, 4-5 April 2002) with a view to (i) discussing priorities for future cooperation; (ii) contributing to better coordination of the action of major intergovernmental organizations in the region, avoiding duplication and increasing complementarity; and (iii) sensitising the international community to the need for concerted efforts. UNESCO presented a strategy paper for action in South-East Europe, which identified priority areas and set out a number of interdisciplinary and inter-State project proposals to be implemented in partnership with other agencies active in the region in its fields of competence.

Education

Within the framework of the sub-regional environmental educational project SEMEP (South East Mediterranean Environmental Project), UNESCO carried out/supported various activities in the region.

The activities run within the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme focussed on building up synergies between its objectives and those of the extra-budgetary Programme on Governance and Management of Higher Education in South East Europe. Universities from Croatia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro benefited from UNESCO-CEPES counselling and financial support for both launching new UNESCO Chairs and networking.

UNESCO, in co-operation with UNMIK and a number of local and international partners, has been developing a pilot project for the training of Kosovar teachers in democratic skills and human rights.

The UNESCO/Stability Pact project education for democratic citizenship: from policy to effective practice through quality assurance in South East Europe was launched in February 2003 in Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Serbia & Montenegro and Slovenia.

UNESCO, in partnership with the Ministry of Education of Bulgaria, the Institute for International Cooperation of the German Association of Adult Education and the European Union, organized the first Regional Conference on Lifelong Learning in Europe: Moving Towards EFA Goals and CONFINTEA V Agenda (Sofia, Bulgaria, November 2002).

A joint UNICEF and UNESCO activity is the ongoing literacy programme for Albanian speaking girls and women which in 2002 concentrated on the training and monitoring of the national monitor team and the facilitators.

The Institute for Information Technologies in Education has launched the sub-regional project Information and Communication Technologies for Education Capacity Development towards the Construction of a Knowledge Society for Southeast European States.. The project is aimed at providing

support to the process of development in the region through raising awareness of high-level education policy makers on the trends, challenges, and priorities of information and communication technology usage in education.

Natural Sciences

In 2002-2003 actions towards the reconstruction of scientific cooperation in South-Eastern Europe have been focussed on the implementation of recommendations of the Round Table of the Ministers of Science The Post-Conflict situation in the Balkans: rebuilding cooperation in South-Eastern Europe in the Fields of Science and Research (Paris, October 2001) and the above mentioned High Level Conference on Strengthening Cooperation in South-East Europe (Paris, 2002).

UNESCO set up several ad hoc Working Groups in order to identify priorities for science and technology and involve the scientific community from the region for the definition and elaboration of a number of regional and long term co-operative projects: Working Group on Research Infrastructures; Working Group on Information and Communication Academic and Research Network (ICARE); Working Group on Restoring and Improving Human potential in research in the region; Working Group on Environment.

Furthermore, UNESCO continues to develop its regular working contacts with scientific communities covering a large spectrum of basic and engineering sciences : the sponsorship of scientific projects aimed at the creation of cooperative networks in the fields of chemistry, material sciences and renewable sources of energy; a number of international scientific meetings with the enlarged participation of young scientific; a series of advanced training activities; provision of short term research and travel grants in the fields of biotechnology and molecular biology to young talented researchers.

Culture

The project Towards a plural cultural identity in a region of intercommunity tension was extended until the end of 2003, focusing on intercultural mediation through different art and pedagogical supports (film, literature, contemporary art). Training sessions in the field of mediation and intercultural management were also developed in Bosnia and Herzegovina for participants of the whole region.

Communication and Information

UNESCO has been setting up a printing plant in Serbia and Montenegro (expected to be operational in September 2003) to provide quality printing services to independent newspapers on fair and reasonable commercial terms. The Organization also provided support to ERNO, a South East European News Exchange for Public Service Television Broadcasters, which functions as a human and technical resource development network, for facilitating the production, transmission and reception of news programmes in the region.

UNESCO has initiated with the World Association of Newspapers a project on media in education in South-East Europe. The project aims at offering

opportunities for young people to learn critical reading and to raise their awareness of the role of the media in democratic society.

To meet the growing needs for advanced network designers and administrators in the region, a series of two-month training courses on Advanced Network Administration and Design were organized by UNESCO in 2002.