



The Role of RCC to strengthen Regional Cooperation in South East Europe

Economic and Social Development

Presentation at the Training Seminar
Quality Infrastructure

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Milestones for regional cooperation in South East Europe

- 1996 – The Southeast European Cooperation Process (SEEC) was launched in Sofia
- 1999 – The stabilization process got momentum through the launching of the Stabilisation and Association Process (**SAP**) for the Western Balkan countries and the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, as mechanisms of predominantly European support to the region.
- 2000 – The Zagreb Process was launched underlining regional approach in the EU policy towards the Western Balkans
- 2003 – The Thessaloniki EU Summit offered a platform for regional cooperation indicating new mechanisms in the context of **SAP**
- 2008 - The Regional Cooperation Council (**RCC**) was set-up and the transition from the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe has been successfully completed



Regional Cooperation Council

Achievements in the SEE region


- EU integration is gaining momentum. Croatia is in the final phase of its accession negotiations. The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is expecting to start accession negotiations. Montenegro, Albania and Serbia recently applied for EU membership. Bosnia and Herzegovina signed the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU but has not yet applied for EU membership
- Albania and Croatia became NATO members in 2009. Other five SEE countries have been included in different forms of PfP programmes
- Southeast European Cooperation Process (SEEC) has been maintained as the major political framework for regional cooperation in SEE
- Numerous (around 46) regional cooperation structures and initiatives have been developed since 1999
- Special relevance of the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA)
- EU introduced visa liberalization for Montenegro, Serbia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia



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Risks


- Effects of the global economic crisis in the region;
- Slowing down of the European integration process (major driving reform force) in the Western Balkans;
- Deterioration of bilateral political relations;
- Fragility of the established regional structures.



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Challenges

- Moving beyond dialogue to greater result orientation.
- Discrepancy between regional ownership, leadership and regional program and project implementation capacity.
- Proliferation of different support programs and regional initiatives.
- Institutional competition.
- Insufficient donor coordination.
- Need for greater coherence of assistance mechanisms and sequencing.



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RCC - two years of operation

- The RCC is a regionally owned organisation (compared with the Stability Pact for SEE)
- The mission of RCC:
 - to promote regional cooperation in SEE with a view of supporting economic and social development
 - to promote the region's European and Euro-Atlantic integration of which regional cooperation is an essential part
- The RCC operates under the political guidance of the SEECP and represents its operational arm. Its objectives, working methods and priority areas for action are defined by the RCC Statute and other documents endorsed by the RCC members at their Annual Meetings, as well as by the SEECP Summits



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RCC Achievements 2008- 2010

- Mapping of national priorities regarding regional cooperation in SEE.
- Mapping, coordinating and streamlining of SEE regional initiatives and structures.
- Strengthening regional cooperation by improving exchange of information, data and expert knowledge
- Bringing together all relevant stakeholders when addressing specific issues, increasing cooperation efficiency and decreasing related costs.
- Initiating networking process among RCC Secretariat, members from SEE, EC and IFIs (including Multi-Beneficiary IPA and IFIAG).
- Launching projects of regional relevance (Public-Private-Partnerships, Women Entrepreneurs, WB 2020, Sustainable Energy Development Regional Initiative, Environmental Cooperation in SEE, Aviation Cooperation in SEE, launch of development of Regional Strategy in the JHA area and of Western Balkans Research Strategy, Security Establishments Cooperation, Disaster Risk Reduction initiatives, Higher Education, Parliamentary Cooperation, Expert Networks, civil society and academia, etc).
- Cooperating with other regional organizations and initiatives (Central European Initiative, Black Sea Economic Cooperation, Adriatic Ionian Initiative, Danube Cooperation Process, Sava Commission).
- Preparing RCC Strategic Work Programme for 2011-2013 in cooperation with EC.



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RCC - strategic planning for 2011 – 2013

The RCC will exercise a number of general ('horizontal') functions:

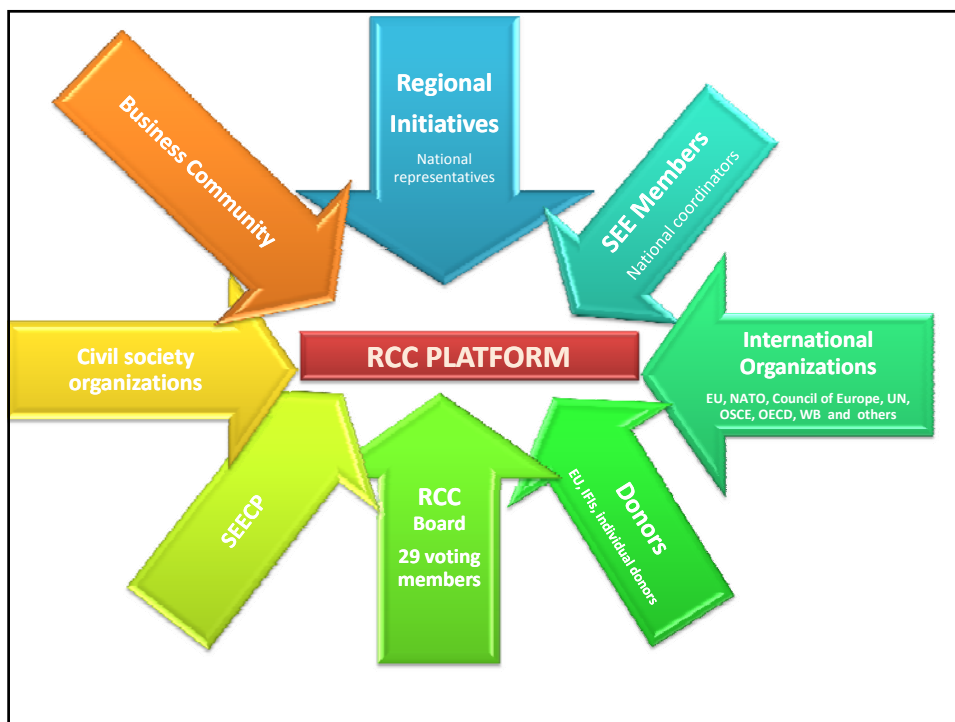
- **Representing the region;**
- **Assisting the SEECP;**
- **Monitoring regional activities;**
- **Exerting strategic leadership in regional cooperation** (*inter alia*, assessing the needs and gaps in regional cooperation, promoting the principle of inclusiveness);
- **Providing a regional perspective in donor assistance, notably in EU assistance under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA).**
- **Supporting increased involvement of civil society in regional activities.**

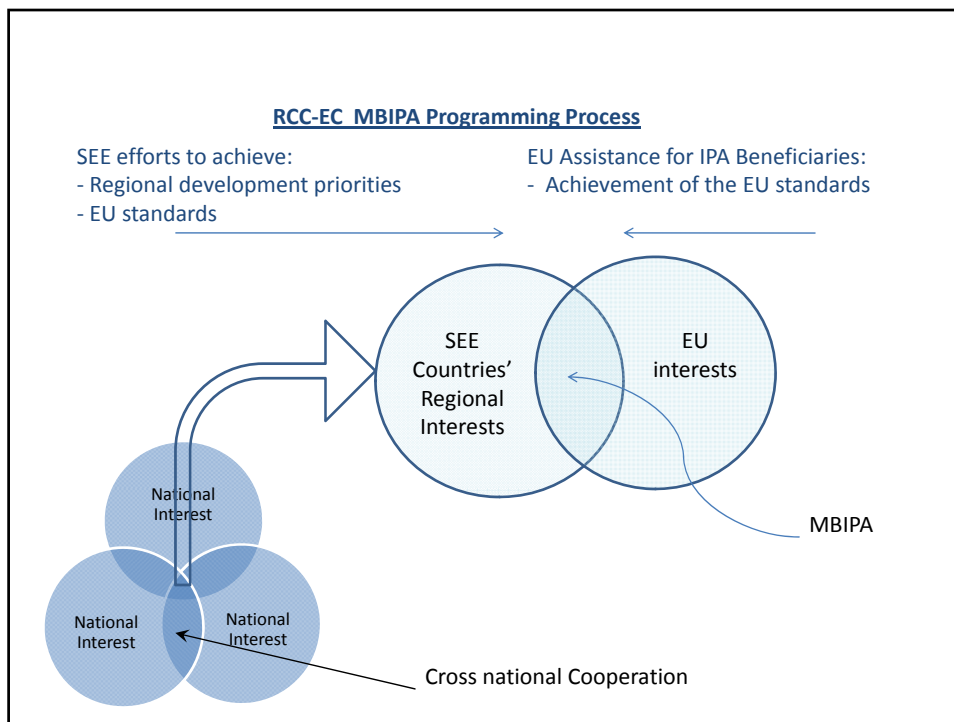
For all the above functions, the RCC will concentrate on the role of **catalyst and 'incubator' of activities.**

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RCC Programming Role – complex inputs

- 5+1 priority areas: Economic and Social Development, Energy and Infrastructure, JHA, Security Cooperation, BHC and Parliamentary Cooperation
- Different categories of “beneficiary” countries: EU members, IPA countries (candidates, potential candidates) and a country covered by EU Neighbourhood Policy
- Diversified players: beneficiary countries’ institutions, regional initiatives, EU, IFIs, other international organizations, individual donor countries, private foundations, business sector, local communities’ networks etc.





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1. RCC Priority Actions - Economic and Social Development

- **Transfer and management of the SEE Investment Committee (SEEIC);**
- **Identifying ways and means for improving access to finance for private sector;**
- **Mainstreaming employment and social agenda into economic reform deliberations;**
- **Promoting the Information Society.**



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1. Regional initiatives and organizations

- SEE Investment Committee (SEEIC)
- Central European Free Trade Agreement 2006 (CEFTA)
- Business Advisory Council for SEE (BAC)
- SEE Public Private Partnership Network (SEEPPPN)
- Regional network of national investment promotion agencies in the SEE Region (RNIPA)
- The Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group of SEE (RRDSWG)
- SEE Regional Network of Policy Makers
- SEE Women Entrepreneurs Network
- SEE Employment and Social Policy Network (SEEESPN)
- Centre of Public Employment Services of SEE Countries (CPSSC)
- SEE Trade Union Forum (SEETUF)
- Adriatic Region Employers' Centre (AREC)
- SEE Health Network
- Centre for eGovernance Development (CeGD)
- eSEE Initiative and bSEE Task Force

Western Balkans 2020

- Technological base of WB companies is very low, their capacity to innovate and attract financing for technology start-ups extremely limited
- Lack of research and technology development in SEE shaped the structure of industry and its outputs

Trade statistics indicate:

- Exports from the region mainly consist of commodities
- Only Croatia's exports of technology driven industries are 10% share of manufacturing exports
- All other WB countries share is 5% or less

To better integrate in EU industrial trends, SEE countries will need to:

- Boost innovation
- Increase adoption of standards
- Improve the transfer of applicable technologies to private sector



Thank you!

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