

Conference Concept Paper

New skills for new jobs

Sarajevo, 27-28 October 2011

Introduction

The Regional Cooperation Council and Friedrich Ebert Foundation will organize a 2 day conference on the theme *New Skills for New Jobs in the Western Balkans*.

Low labour force participation and persistently high unemployment rates in the Western Balkan countries call for better understanding and focused immediate and long-term action. In times when many countries go through cycles of jobless growth and job-shedding decline, the region needs to creatively address the issue of the provision of appropriate skills for current and future jobs and better functioning of labour markets. A more highly skilled workforce will support competitiveness, leading to more and better jobs as the region exits the current economic crisis.

The conference

The conference will discuss imbalances between labour demand and supply in the Western Balkan countries, with special attention to the importance of an analysis based on skills. The conference will aim to address the role of key stakeholders in the labour market, with a focus on how to anticipate skills needs, generate new jobs and improve the matching process. The target group for the conference is national government ministries, public employment services, social partners and regional organizations.

Section 1: Current status and future trends of skills demand and supply in the Western Balkans. Economic restructuring has displaced part of the workforce from shrinking sectors to unemployment rather than to new growing sectors mostly due to the lack of skills. What skills do today's and tomorrow's jobs require? What skills is the region good at and where should its priorities lie? How can the region encourage the creation of high-skilled jobs?

Section 2: Role and capacities of national stakeholders in forming partnerships and bridging the gap between education, training and work.

How can the region actively address skill gaps for current and future labour market needs in the region and beyond? How can both supply and demand side skills analysis contribute to better matching? How can we strengthen the region's capacity to identify and match labour market and skill needs? How can we strengthen capacities and networking among the education system, labour policies, public employment services and social partners?

The overarching theme from the RCC perspective is the assessment of the scope for regional cooperation in this area. Do the countries in the region share the same development model? What are their comparative advantages and sector priorities? What do the EU accession process and the future EU membership entail in terms of demand for jobs and skills? What is the scope



for regional action in the area of capacity building for skills gap analysis and skills enhancement as well as strengthened coordination among national and regional stakeholders? What skill gap analyses are carried out in the region, and what is the scope for policy learning between countries?

An important session of the event will be comprised of presentations by members of the LSEE (London School of Economics Research on South East Europe) research network on social cohesion, who will bring a most welcome civil society perspective on social development issues.

Moreover, regional and international perspectives on best practice, lessons learned, and potential modes of cooperation will contribute to the conference.