

EDUCATION, CAPACITY BUILDING & PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

*Prepared by
Aldo Fumagalli Romario and Danica Purg*

Building human capital in Southeast Europe is a challenge integrated with increasing competitiveness of the European economy overall. Capacity building should be an effort directed not only towards the youth, but also towards educators throughout the broader educational system. Exchanges of students and academics for increased exposure to experiences abroad and the European system of norms and values should be supported by a procedure for visa facilitation for academic purposes. Visa facilitation is also necessary for vocational training, which should be radically reformed and developed in cooperation with European capacity building mechanisms and the private sector. Finally, professional public administrators, managers and leaders need to be developed, and become familiar with European and international best practices in fields like public private partnerships, infrastructure projects and trade. Interaction and cooperation between all actors involved in such initiatives is necessary in order to avoid duplication of efforts and to improve results.

EDUCATION AS A “MUST” FOR IMPROVED COMPETITIVENESS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Economic globalization has developed into a major challenge for Europe, raising the imperative question of how to increase competitiveness versus the consolidated strong and economy of the US and the fast growing economies of China, India, and the other developing parts of the world. At present, in fact, Europe is losing place on the world competitiveness scale, making the achievement of improved growth rates harder for the new members and candidates of EU.

Within South-Eastern Europe, there exist different stages of economic, social and institutional development and variant levels of democratic and market reforms. Full and effective regional integration of SEE into the European Union family may provide to the whole continent more nourishment and impulse. Partial integration, on the contrary, may provoke the destabilisation.

Therefore, the **main targets** to be reached in order to **increase the European competitiveness** are:

- **expansion of the European market**
- **higher level of integration and harmonization among European states, economies and societies**
- **rise of investments in R&D and the improvement of the scientific educational level, with particular emphasis on the development of e-skills and e-capacities**
- **increase of the attractiveness of European Countries with regard to new investments in infrastructure, manufacturing and services**
- **development of a strong tissue of innovating and dynamic SMEs in all SEE Countries**

Reaching these goals requires a strong commitment in education not only by EU members, but also the SEE countries.

Education, in fact, in a fast moving information society, **is the key factor for development and competitiveness**. Moreover, education is an area in which **public and private interests are equally engaged and challenged**, and therefore they must join their efforts.

There are **three areas of education policies and needs:**

- 1) **students and professors**
- 2) **vocational training, professional and leadership development**
- 3) **civil servants**

STUDENTS AND PROFESSORS

SEE Countries are in the process of and need to develop a new generation of students (future labour force, political and economic leaders), adaptable to the needs of a market economy and information society, and appreciative of the values of meritocracy, mobility, entrepreneurship and internationalisation.

Young SEE talents must be nurtured and trained, and then be provided with incentives to unfold their capacities in building a new Europe. The existing phenomenon of brain-drain of young professionals (students, researchers and professors), mainly directed towards US and other non-European Anglo-Saxons countries, must be challenged. This can be done through:

- **the promotion of a stronger and wider European educational network and the utilisation of the existing one**, under the framework of which European Universities and academic institutions, R&D centers, companies and public institutions can give to the young generation stimulus, challenges and growth opportunities, through scholarships and stages,
- **the growth and consolidation of SEE economies**, which - together with the development of a productive interaction between schools, universities, enterprises and public institutions - can attract talents and offer opportunities for talent identification, development and employment in the regional economy, enhancing the expression of creative and innovative spirits.

It is important to stress that a **visa regime** that builds walls among European countries must be avoided: this is most urgent for the youth of the more isolated countries – namely Southeast Europe. Travelling, visiting different countries, meeting new young generations, exchanging ideas, sharing experiences and be able to take advantage of employment and training opportunities abroad is essential for the growth, the education and the consolidation of a real new young European generation. Therefore, the business community would like to make the following recommendations:

- to **develop a better synergy among existing European Universities**, student programs, stages and business initiatives, in order to better market and promote the advantages of an enhanced learning experience in Europe (“Choose Europe for your education and professional development!”). Advantages of the “European advantage” (historical tradition, multiculturalism, social, economic and political diversity) should be additionally stressed
- to work for a **mutual compatibility and recognition of University courses in all European countries**, as regard to their structure and final degree award
- to **increase the mobility of professors and students** among European Universities and professional schools, through joint research programs, cross border workshops, etc
- to **enhance the number and the amount of scholarship awards and paid stages** for SEE talented students in European Universities and enterprises
- to **increase public-private sector cooperation** to make the SEE basic education system more conciliatory, more productive, and more in line with the future needs of the knowledge economy characteristics necessary for regional growth and development
- to **promote a much more efficient Visa regime for SEE students** so that they can travel, study and work in a much easier and more flexible way in all European Countries (e.g. recommendation of the International Commission for the Balkans, regarding the request that a Visa program for 150.000 students of the Balkan region should be applied within 2005)

- Western European countries and EU bodies and institutions should be more and more engaged in **favouring exchange programs for SEE students**, facilitating procedures and financing their stages and temporary working periods in European companies

VOCATIONAL TRAINING & PROFESSIONAL AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Enterprises need a work force able to cope within a free market, and familiar with the environment of a modern information society. The principles of team working, geographic and career mobility, continuous formation, and meritocracy, should become common culture. A more custom-oriented attitude, a flexible approach to different working experiences and career planning, and a job attitude based on autonomy and responsibility are the challenges for a modern work force. Many EU companies involved with direct investments into SEE countries are engaged in promoting the development of this process, but their efforts must be helped by all governments through active policies: **existing restrictions in migration laws make it impossible for the vibrant and talented young labor force of SEE countries to train and develop new skills in the European Union.** In view of all this, the business community would like to propose the following:

- to **promote professional schools** in SEE countries with the aim of reinforcing or creating new economic districts, and interconnecting them with Western European schools through exchange programs
- to organize the systematic **codification of professional qualifications and skills** for SEE economies, as the basis for the development of professional and vocational training curricula
- **to facilitate Visa release** for vocational training for SEE citizens
- to stimulate the **appointment of professional and skilled managers**, with international education and experience, **into SEE Public State-owned Companies**
- to **promote a closer cooperation between SEE Governments and the private sector** through new mechanisms or existing EU institutions such as the European Center for Vocational and Professional Training (CEDEFOP) or the European Training Foundation (ETF)

CIVIL SERVANTS & PUBLIC ADMINISTRATORS

Even though SEE countries find themselves in different levels of economic development, all of them still have to reform (and in some cases to build) their civil servant body according to the needs and requirements that an open market economy needs in order to smoothly function. **Public sector reform is admittedly the biggest single bottle neck for democratization and economic liberalization.** Both citizens and enterprises need a public administration mechanism capable to serve as partner and real promoter of collective wealth and wellbeing.

Civil servants must be educated and trained so as to acquire a more participating and less formalistic approach and relationship with citizens and enterprises. A more managerial and less bureaucratic managing of public bodies and institutions is thus required. Some areas critical for faster economic growth (public-private partnerships, infrastructure planning and building, foreign direct investments promotion, and free trade) are fully dependent upon the managing capacity of public administrators, who are the interlocutors that the business community seeks more and more; they need to be well trained, multilingual and committed to market economy professionals and leaders.

Both the public and the private sector have already started different initiatives in this direction, but results of all these initiatives depend on proper information dissemination and willingness to join efforts instead of competing. Consequently, the business community would like to recommend:

- to develop and **promote programs in Excellence in Public Administration** for capacity building of the new SEE bureaucracy, starting with the top level administrators (e.g. program for

40 young public administrator of SEE – Excellence in Public Administration, supported by the BAC and implemented by the Bled School of Management)

- to **increase the involvement of the local business community into such capacity building programs**, so as to increase interaction with local public administrations
- to **involve European and international financial institutions into the preliminary education** of high level SEE administrators on public private partnership projects, infrastructure development, privatisation and institutional capacity building
- to **promote a commonly agreed certification and accreditation system of the new SEE public administrators, integrating an important international component**, so as to promote regional and inter-regional development projects that become always more important (energy, telecommunication, transportation) through the cooperation of public administrators
- to **attract back to SEE young talented students that have been educated abroad**, offering true opportunities in SEE public administration bodies.