



**“Improving Cooperation in SEE by Actions for Strengthening the RCC”
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Workshop with journalists on South East Europe 2020 strategy
Sarajevo, 18-19 March 2014

**Opening address by Gazmend Turdiu, Deputy Secretary General,
Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)**

Distinguished participants,
Dear journalists,
Dear colleagues of the CEI and of the RCC

- It is my pleasure to be here with you today at the opening of this workshop with journalists from the region, on our South East Europe 2020 strategy, jointly organized by the Regional Cooperation Council and the Central European Initiative (CEI).
- Before I go to the specifics of this workshop and its subject, I wish to share with you a few words about the Regional Cooperation Council.
- This organisation came into being as the successor of the Stability Pact for South East Europe. The transformation of the Stability Pact to the new organisation, the RCC, reflected the progress made so far and the increased, as well as consolidated potential, of the Balkan countries to take ownership over cooperation in regional level.
- Working under the political guidance SEECP, RCC's mission at that time was to promote peace, stability and reconciliation through regional cooperation, and to assist and support our countries in their path to European and Euroatlantic integration.
- Actually, the situation on the region has further evolved and the RCC is adjusting itself to the present challenges. Almost a year ago, it started to shift the focus of its activity from contribution to peace and stability, to promotion of an integrated, sustainable, inclusive and smart job creating economic development in the region.
- The reason for this shift was that the main concerns for the region became those related to the economic situation. Although most of the Western Balkan countries, even during the ongoing financial and economic crisis, were able to maintain relatively acceptable macroeconomic

parameters for their economies, the fact is that, as stressed by the speakers of this morning's conference, the modest growth of our economies has been a jobless growth.

- Last year RCC came up with the SEE 2020 Strategy, Jobs and Prosperity in a European Perspective. Its beneficiaries are the seven economies of the Western Balkans. The name of the strategy highlights not just its aim of promoting job creation through economic development, but even the aim of doing this in the clear framework of European perspective integration for the Western Balkans.
- The strategy will help our countries to implement their national development plans, but in a regional context, for reaching common regional targets. In order to be useful for its beneficiaries and relevant for the region, in this document we have set clear measurable targets, so that by monitoring their achievement, we would be able to measure success and eventually to review and adjust the related development policies, both at the national and at the regional level.
- I will not enter into the details of the strategy document. They have been presented so eloquently this morning by my colleagues Sanjin Arifagic, and they will be further elaborated by my other colleagues present this afternoon, Mladen Dragasevic and Nand Shani, to be continued tomorrow morning by my other colleagues Dragana Djuric and Amna Redzepagic, all them responsible for important aspects of the strategy.
- The strategy was drafted and presented by the RCC, and it has been endorsed by the ministers of economy of the region. The implementation phase has started. Its implementation will take place at the national but also at regional level, by cooperation and mutual support of a multitude of partners: governments, local authorities, regional organisations, regional initiatives, the European Commission, IFIs, private businesses, academic circles, civil society, and media.

Dear participants,

- We all know that there can be no healthy democracy without free media, without you. You provide essential services to citizens: reliable information, life-long learning, access to culture, quality entertainment, but also support for diversity, social cohesion, innovation, and for preservation of cultural heritage.
- We want that the implementation of SEE 2020 is a fully transparent process. This is the only way to increase public awareness on the strategy, and to provide information to the wider public on its implementation.
- You are the most important partner for us to reaching this goal. But if we do not make sure that you are aware of the strategy and its implementation, you cannot fulfil your mission of informing the wider public

- By inviting you to this workshop, we wanted to offer give you the opportunity to know more on this document and what its expectations are. We are inviting you to be our partners in mobilising public support and well as on supporting continuous public scrutiny of its implementation.
- I thank you for being today with us and I very much look forward to continue working together
- Thank you.