EU Integration of South Eastern Europe

Challenge

Seen from the perspective of the South Eastern European countries and the European Union (EU), the region needs to be closely linked to or integrated into the EU. This is a fundamental step towards establishing the frame conditions for political, economic and legal stability as well as internal reforms and cross-border cooperation between the countries.

The project focuses on the improvement of competencies in three thematic components:

EU integration of the central level administration
The requirements of the EU enlargement process are a challenge for the central level administrations. Beside political governance it is these administrations that mainly shape the reform and alignment processes. They are responsible for the implementation of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) and the management of the EU pre-accession instrument (IPA) and do have to implement the requirements that get more and more comprehensive in the course of the accession process. However, they lack competence in the field of EU integration.

EU integration of rural economic areas
The sustainable development of rural areas is a basic prerequisite for the internal stability of the region and for EU integration and requires mobilising the endogenous development potential by involving all relevant stakeholders. At the same time, EU-conform alignment of the respective policy areas and accentuating the need for regional development policy are of particular importance.

EU approximation of economic and labour markets by vocational training
Economic development and the need for occupational mobility within Europe require the comparability of educational certificates and professional qualifications.

Thus, the improvement of the vocational training and employment situation forms another challenge in the process of EU approximation.

Objective

The programme “EU Integration of South Eastern Europe” focuses on improving national, regional and local management and administrative competencies of the partner countries fostering at the same time transnational cooperation.

Our approach

The programme uses Human Capacity Development (HCD) in the form of further education, training, network building, dialogue platforms as well as Capacity to build Capacity approaches for qualifying training institutions. Within this process, training measures are implemented on the basis of participatory planning. The focus is directed to individuals who should be enabled to initiate and realize change processes for sustainable development within their sphere of influence.
In the central level administrations in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia structures facilitating the independent planning, implementation and evaluation of IPA projects and the access to IPA funds are supported. To be prepared for this process, multipliers gain professional and methodic competencies in Trainings of Trainers. Decision makers of central level administrations get qualified for adopting the community law (“Acquis Communautaire”) and for implementing the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA).

For integrated regional rural development in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia mainly regional HCD measures are offered. National partner institutions are supported in shaping frame conditions for an EU-conform development of rural areas. Capacity Building offers for local and regional stakeholders combine participative regional development with local and regional economic promotion as well as relevant EU support programmes. Stakeholders learn how to initiate, steer and implement regional development processes in order to ensure the sustainable development of rural areas. Institutionalized regional management forms the necessary structural framework that is required by this process. This territorial approach provides a basis for regional and transnational cooperation.

For aligning the vocational education with EU standards in Bulgaria, the Republic of Moldova, Romania and the Ukraine, qualification and credit systems are established. These systems improve the transparency of educational degrees and learning opportunities. At the same time, national educational standards get comparable throughout the EU. Partners acquire competencies in analyzing European structures, assessing qualifications and developing new education schemes, what facilitates the mutual recognition of certificates. In order to better integrate enterprises in the reformation of vocational training systems, they are encouraged to support training institutions in developing, implementing and evaluating tailor-made training programmes, thus, qualifying in-plant staff according to employment demands.

**Results – What has been achieved so far?**

The regional design of the HCD measures ensures learning effects among the partner countries and the formation of transnational networks. Trainings of multipliers have enabled experts from ministries, NGOs and the education sector to gain know-how in acquiring and implementing EU projects and to pass this knowledge to their working environment in the future. Local and regional stakeholders of pilot regions have been qualified in trainings on LEADER approach, regional development strategies and regional management to establish EU-conform structures for integrated regional rural development in their countries. In the field of vocational training, partner institutions have been supported in developing and implementing competence-based vocational standards.

Regional conferences offer platforms for sector, policy and stakeholder dialogues. One of the prominent dialogue fora in South Eastern Europe is the annual Agricultural Policy Forum, which unites experts from politics, science and economy to discuss strategies for creating political frame conditions of an EU-conform development of rural areas. The promotion of transnational technical networks facilitates the strengthening of the regional transfer of know-how and competencies. The Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG RRD), which consists of representatives of the agricultural ministries of the member states, is a network, the mandate of which is fostered through targeted HCD measures.

Further information can be found at: www.gc21.de/eu-see