



Brussels, 19 January 2006

“Regional Capacity Strengthening Programme for Urban Development and Housing in SEE” (RCSP): Action-plan 2006

The RCSP has been designed in close consultation with the SEE countries and international partners through a series of regional stakeholder workshops and programme design meetings organised by SP/HUMI in 2005.

In November 2005, SEE Ministries appointed "National Focal Points" to support the RCSP development and both the Council of European Development Bank (CEB) as well as the European Investment Bank (EIB) underlined their interest to become a formal members of the Regional Steering Committee of the RCSP. With financial support from the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB) and the Governments of Switzerland and Luxemburg, an UN-HABITAT expert team is currently holding detailed consultations with SEE stakeholders at national and local level to finalise the programme.

The final RCSP programme document will be available for final stakeholder review and subsequent endorsement in April 2006.

The first SEE stakeholder proposals for pilot regional capacity building activities under the RCSP are expected to be discussed, selected and approved by an “Interim Regional Steering Committee” - composed of SEE Ministries, UN-HABITAT, SP/HUMI, the Council of Europe Development Bank and the European Investment Bank - in Tirana on 4-5 May 2006.

Proposed action-plan for final preparatory activities (January –May 2006):

Phase A (started 9 Jan 2006): Preparatory missions for individual SEE workshops

Programme Development Team (International expert: Mr Roberto Ottolenghi, SEE regional expert: Mr Aleksander Stular) to initially consult “National Focal Points” appointed by SEE Ministries and relevant IFI representatives (7-9 consultations)

- *Purpose:* To jointly identify national capacity building gaps and priorities as well as main national stakeholders; First consultations with in-country parties relevant to RCSP development

Phase B: Workshops with SEE stakeholders

Programme Development Team to organise workshops based on initial consultations of phase A (approximately 1 workshop per beneficiary, 7 workshops in total).

- *Purpose:* To formulate the first pilot regional activities in close consultation with SEE partners; To formalise the programme’s operational framework

Phase C: Regional stakeholder meeting in Tirana (4-5 May 2006)

Programme Development Team and SP to summarise the results of initial consultations and follow-up workshops in a final programme document, laying down the specific steps for start of programme implementation in late 2006 (document to be circulated for comments two weeks prior to regional review meeting)

- *Purpose:* To review and agree the draft final RCSP programme document; RCSP Interim Steering Committee to discuss and approve potential pilot activities; To review regional Vienna Declaration implementation progress



Regional Capacity Strengthening Programme for Urban Development and Housing in SEE (RCSP)

Need for Reforms

Human settlements development is playing a key role in the socio-economic development of South Eastern Europe and absorbs two-thirds of national investments in fixed assets. The inadequate reform progress in the sectors of housing and urban development represents a major obstacle to economic growth, environmental sustainability and more equitable distribution of social and economic opportunities.

Response

To support SEE countries in furthering essential reforms in the above areas and to assist the EU integration process, a regional capacity strengthening effort is essential.

The Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe and UN-HABITAT are therefore jointly facilitating the development of a "Regional Capacity Strengthening Programme for Housing and Urban Development in South Eastern Europe" in close co-operation with all parties.

The Programme

A regional facility for capacity strengthening, based in the region, is envisaged.

Key elements: Promotion of a harmonised planning system and legislation in the region; policy and institutional development assistance to key players; support for the process of EU accession (adoption of relevant parts of the *Acquis Communautaire*); strengthened project development and implementation capacity at national and municipal level leading to improved investment absorption capacity; SEE Governments able to implement their commitments made under the Vienna Declaration.

Beneficiaries: National and local Governments, planning institutes, professional associations, university faculties and civil society

Tools: Regional and national workshops, training courses, seminars, short-term consultancy support and pilot projects (programme duration: 3-5 years on a phased basis).

Work Plan

Following the formulation of a conceptual framework for the RCSP in October 2005, stakeholders from SEE, IFIs and International Organisations have agreed a joint SP/UN-HABITAT work-plan for programme preparation activities to be financially supported by the Council of Europe Development Bank and the Swiss Development Co-operation.

In close co-operation with national focal points appointed by the relevant SEE Ministries, a SP/UN-HABITAT expert team will organise pilot activities and national stakeholder workshops in the region between December 2005 and April 2006. A final programme document will be reviewed and concluded in May 2006, paving the way for gradual programme implementation in late 2006.

Strong Support

The *political support* from SEE Governments, IFIs and International organisations to strengthen sector capacity is *undoubtedly given*. This support was clearly expressed at the Ministerial Conference on Informal Settlements in Vienna in October 2004 and during a variety of regional stakeholder meetings in 2005.