The South-East Europe's Path towards the EU: Progress through reforms and the way ahead regarding CFSP and CSDP
30 November - 02 December 2010

IRC-07-S

EXTERNAL REPORT

Background

The European Security Strategy (ESS), the first one ever presented by the EU, identified major threats to European stability, stressed the importance of Brussels' ability, with the Common Foreign Security Policy (CFSP), to exert soft power (the use of non-coercive diplomatic techniques to resolve conflicts, e.g., dispatching peace-keepers, aid, etc.), and harness Europe's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). The CSDP strengthens the EU's civilian and military capacity to act in conflict prevention and crisis management. Six South East European countries lay claim to seeking eventual, fully-fledged membership in the European Union. Three of them are official candidates (one of which may officially join the EU within the next year, and the other two are making very encouraging progress in that direction), while the remaining three countries have the status of potential candidates. However, there are still challenges lying ahead on these countries’ path toward the EU. In spite of many hurdles, SEE’s EU hopefuls have the capacity to rise to the challenge by implementing reforms that will enhance future accession negotiations. RACVIAC, along with its international partners, stands committed to SEE countries’ progress toward membership in the European Union.

Acknowledgements

RACVIAC wishes to take this opportunity to express sincere gratitude to the Federal Republic of Germany for their financial contribution, which made this Seminar possible.

Aim

The aim of this seminar was to contribute to regional security cooperation in South East Europe, which is, in turn, an important tool for promoting its European integration efforts. The seminar offered a common framework for the implementation of the European Security Strategy and its evolving form under the Common Foreign Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) in SEE.

Venue, duration and participation

The Seminar was held at RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation, from 30 November to 02 December 2010. It was organized as a three-day event, two of which were working days. The Seminar gathered a total of 45 participants, namely national officials nominated by the contributing countries from the Region, diplomatic/defence representatives from SEE countries and regional security organizations.
The Seminar agenda comprised speeches by high-level representatives, as well as national presentations, which were followed by exchanges of experiences and points of view on common priorities and challenges and open discussions.

Welcome remarks by H.E. Ambassador Nikola Todorčevski, RACVIAC’s Director, marked the beginning of the working part of the Seminar. Ambassador Todorčevski emphasized that the SEE countries, by supporting this Seminar, had reconfirmed their readiness to utilize it for their mutual benefit, in terms of sharing experience, deepening professional contacts and enhancing cooperation on their path to European integration. He expressed his strong belief that this event would boost the capacity-building process in SEE countries and pave the way for a more open discussion on existing and future challenges in the process of the preparation for accession to the European Union and for an exchange of national and individual best practices and points of view.

The Opening session proceeded with an address by Ms Vesna Pusić, President of the National Committee in the Parliament of the Republic of Croatia. Ms Pusić’s address was an excellent opportunity for the audience to learn about Croatian, both past and current, European integration efforts. Her knowledge and expertise proved very useful for national representatives attending the seminar as she demonstrated a remarkable ability to present a comprehensive picture of Croatian experience in EU matters accompanied with useful examples from Croatian European integration process.

Ms Pusić offered a deep insight into the work of institutions involved in the process of negotiations, with special focus on the National Committee for Monitoring the EU Accession Negotiations (including the status of the negotiation process, benchmarks, tasks, obstacles and the final phase of Croatian negotiations).

The keynote speech was delivered by mr.sc. Andrej Plenković, State Secretary for EU Integration in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and European Integration (MFAEI) of the Republic of Croatia. Mr Plenković reaffirmed the Croatian commitment to implement the policy of strengthening regional co-operation, with the aim of ensuring permanent stability and prosperity in the region. In that regard, Croatian activities in regional organisations and initiatives have always promoted and reflected the principles and instruments of the EU’s policy towards the SEE region. Promotion of good-neighborly relations and strengthening of security and stability through all regional initiatives, particularly through the South-East European Cooperation Process (the umbrella forum for political co-operation in this part of Europe) have always been the focus of Croatian foreign affairs activities. Mr Plenković also emphasized that the Croatian defence policy was harmonized with the EU and that in that field Croatia had developed all necessary instruments for the EU integration.

His address was also a good opportunity to highlight that by participating in the EU CSDP missions and operations Croatia had gained valuable international experience, practical knowledge and the possibility to be recognized as a credible contributor to CSDP civil and military missions.

Session I of the Seminar, moderated by Ms Ines Troha Brbar, Head of Department for CFSP and CSDP, from MFAEI (HR), concerned the "Survey of the EU Novelties in the Field of CFSP and CSDP". Mr Hans-Bernhard Weisserth from the Council of the European Union and Acting Head of the European Security and Defence Secretariat
provided the audience with an excellent overview of the latest developments in the EU regarding the CFSP and the CSDP. Dr. Rudolf Logothetti, Senior Political Advisor in the Directorate for Security Policy in MoD (AT) contributed on the topic: "Overview of the EU CSDP policies towards South-East Europe", while Mr Fabien Limonier (FRA), Political Advisor in EUFOR (BA) covered the topic of: "Evolution of the European forces". Following the speakers’ addresses, the floor was open for questions and answers, which gave the participants an opportunity to engage in fruitful discussions.

The last, fourth session of the Seminar was moderated by Mr Igor Tabak, a defence analyst, and it concerned "Benefits from the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy of the EU (CSDP) in SEE". In this session, the following speakers delivered their lectures: Mr Djordje Tomić, MSc, Faculty of Political Science (BA); LTC. Sava Savić, MSc, Institute for Strategic Research in MoD (RS) and Mr Sandro Knežović, PhD, Institute for International Relations in Zagreb (HR). All lecturers presented their academic views and experience related to the CFSP and the CSDP, with representative examples of benefits arising from such common policies.

Session II was dedicated to: "The candidate’s experience from contributing to CFSP and CSDP activities" and it was moderated by H.E. Mr. Dančo Markovski, Ambassador of MK to HR. In this session, the participants had an opportunity to hear the speeches by Mr Silvio Kus, Minister Counselor from Department for CFSP and CSDP in MFAEI (HR); Mr Goran Božinovski, Head of Unit in MFA (MK) and H.E. Mr. Burak Özügergin, Ambassador of Turkey to the Republic of Croatia. The above-mentioned speakers presented their respective countries’ perspectives regarding their candidate’s experience in the CFSP and CSDP activities.

The second working day started with the third session, which was dedicated to the potential candidate’s experience in contributing to the CFSP and CSDP activities. The moderator of this session was LTC Nedim Ulusan (TR), RACVIAC’s Programme Manager, while the following speakers addressed the audience: Ms Bardhyka Olladashi, Department for CSDP in MoD (AL); Ms Snežana Višnjić, Department for the EU, MFA (BA); Mr Nusret Hanjač, Ministry of Defence (ME) and Cpt. Goran Mutavdić, Ministry of Defence (RS). Following the speakers’ presentations on respective national perspectives and their respective countries’ potential candidate’s experience in the CFSP and CSDP activities, the floor was open for participants’ questions and open discussion.

Session closing remarks

The seminar entitled "The South-East Europe’s Path towards the EU: Progress through reforms and the way ahead regarding CFSP and CSDP" successfully provided a comprehensive framework for exchanging experience and information on the common priorities of the EU integration in South East Europe. The seminar’s initial objectives, namely: presenting and discussing the progress of the regional countries on their way towards the EU; analyzing the level of alignment between the EU and SEE countries in terms of foreign and security policy; learning from the candidates’ and potential candidates' experiences in this field; fostering the EU integration of SEE countries by enabling exchanges of opinions and lessons learned - were all successfully achieved. This event has proved that RACVIAC’s efforts are part of the capacity-building process, in terms of promoting EU standards and values and preparing for accession to the EU, and that RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation is a very good setting for engaging in fruitful dialogue.

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