

## **EDUCATION REFORM AGENDA: An Update, June 2003**

*On 21 November 2002 the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina (the Education Ministries and the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees) agreed with the international community upon an Education Reform Agenda. The High Representative has asked the governments to reflect on their progress on this agenda over the past six months and to send representatives to the PIC Steering Board meeting of Political Directors on 12 June 2003 to provide an update. The governments have specifically been asked to give a presentation on education reform progress, the obstacles remaining to be overcome in achieving the critical reforms, and an assessment of initiatives that should receive priority treatment over the next few months.*

*The present document provides a status report as seen by the OHR and OSCE and other international organisations represented on the Education Issue Set Steering Group<sup>1</sup>. The document is based on the structure of the Education Reform Agenda and includes a progress report and suggested priority steps for the next six months.*

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<sup>1</sup> The EISSG is made up of the heads of international organisations involved in education, including OSCE, OHR, UNICEF, UNESCO, UNHCR, the Council of Europe, the European Commission, the World Bank, US Embassy/Civitas and PRSP.

## Executive Summary

On November 21, 2002, the BiH authorities presented an Education Reform Agenda to the Peace Implementation Council in Brussels. The agenda, "Reforming Education to give BiH a better future" is a comprehensive document, developed by local stakeholders with support from the international community, listing goals for education reform and focusing on actions needed to realise those goals. Since November, the focus of the reform efforts has been to move ahead with implementation plans which include specific short-term objectives to be met by the next school year (2003/04) and an operational plan for the medium to longer term objectives.

Of these comprehensive reform objectives, the Education Issue Set Steering Group agreed in February 2003 to prioritise a number of issues as set out below. Education Working Groups, which have been meeting intensively over the past six months, have developed the implementation plans and, where needed, set up several target-specific bodies/instruments which bring together the required experts and authorities to implement urgent targets and which are in most cases chaired by local authorities. Together with ongoing reform projects in line with the Education Reform Agenda, these mechanisms ensure consistent and concerted efforts towards the targets agreed at the November 2002 PIC while at the same time ensuring compatibility with the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) developed by BiH stakeholders.

As this report shows, steady progress has been made towards ensuring that the following reform priorities are met to the maximum extent possible by the beginning of the next school year, September 2003:

- Full Implementation of the Interim Agreement on Returnee Children
- Implementation of a Common Core Curriculum in primary and general secondary education
- Implementation of the state-level framework Law on Primary and General Secondary Education and passage of a state-level framework Law on Higher Education
- Signature of the Bologna Declaration by BiH
- Unification of two schools under one roof<sup>2</sup> starting with full administrative and legal unification<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Today in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there are 52 schools considered "two-schools-under-one-roof" located in 26 school buildings in cantons 4, 6 and 7 in the Federation of BiH. In these schools separate Bosniak and Croat curricula and administrative structures exist, and children, as well as the teachers that teach them, often have no mutual contact. In some cases, students enter the schools through separate entrances, have separate breaks and the teachers do not use the same teacher's room. In most cases the two schools also retained their separate legal identities.

<sup>3</sup> Administrative and legal unification would include: appointment of one School Director; appointment of one multi-ethnic School Board; registration of school as one legal body with a single school name; establishment of joint administrative personnel; development of a joint budget; and participation of School Directors and teachers in joint planning activities for the new school year.

Three months before the target completion date, however, there is still much work to be done before these priorities can be considered fully implemented:

- Preliminary statistics compiled on the percentage of returnee children in schools highlight that concentrated efforts are urgently required by ministry and school authorities to further increase the number of returnee children and teachers in schools and end the phenomenon of bussing of children to schools outside their area of return (in some instances, children still travel 20km past a school 100m away from their home in order to attend mono-ethnic schools).
- An implementation plan for the Common Core Curriculum must be devised and agreed upon at an inter-ministerial level. Local authorities will need to move quickly to put as much of the Common Core Curriculum as possible in place at the start of the school year.
- Parliament must adopt before the summer break the state-level framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education which it is currently reviewing, and the state-level draft framework Law on Higher Education, currently under public consultation, must pass to the Council of Ministers and then into parliamentary procedure. Parliament must be urged to adopt the law speedily.
- Agreement must be obtained from cantonal authorities to defer higher education competencies in the Federation to the Entity level. As yet, local authorities have made no moves towards this crucial objective. Future financial assistance has and should be made conditional on reform in this area.
- Strong political support is needed to move forward the process of unification of two schools under one roof in the Federation. The continued segregation of Bosniak and Croat children through “two-schools-under-one-roof” completely contradicts the principles set forth in the Education Reform Strategy by Ministers of Education to “put an end to segregation and discrimination through education” and to “cut wastage, duplication and inefficiencies in BiH’s education system.”

In addition to laying the groundwork for longer term education modernisation through the implementation of the above-noted short-term objectives, several initiatives focusing on the medium to longer term goals have already been launched:

- Completion of a Green Paper which provides recommendations for further development of the activities planned under the Education Reform Pledge 2 as well as for legislation and financing of general education (Pledge 5). Development of a White Paper<sup>4</sup> will follow by the end of October 2003.
- New curricula have been developed for six occupational profiles (baker, cook, tailor, waiter, clerk and electrician) and implemented in 30 schools. Reform of all occupational profiles into broad-based curricular families is now the priority.

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<sup>4</sup> Terminology taken from the title of an EC paper

**Key:** + = *Achieved objective/major progress*  
- = *Failed to achieve objective/minimal progress*

- Application for signing the Bologna Declaration in September 2003 submitted to the Greek EU Presidency setting out implementation plans for higher education reform in line with Bologna Declaration commitments.

But significant efforts are still needed to ensure that reform stays on track:

- Systematic and consistent rationalisation of the vocational education system into broad occupational categories relevant to labour market requirements must be pursued vigorously to reduce costs and to offer students more flexibility as regards their professions.
- A labour market information system must be established to provide information on labour market needs which is of crucial importance for vocational and higher education reform.
- Universities must restructure into integrated institutions with the faculties ceasing to be legal units as provided by the state-level draft framework Law on Higher Education and the Bologna Process. With the exception of Tuzla University, universities have made little or no progress on this to date.
- The BiH authorities must set up urgently a Centre for Recognition of Academic Qualifications of BiH in line with the draft state-level framework Law on Higher Education and the Lisbon Recognition Convention. This Centre will ensure standard, fair and transparent diploma recognition procedures.

Overall, education reform in BiH has significantly, albeit too slowly in some important respects, been moving ahead. The Education Reform Agenda has made reform an urgent priority; education stakeholders including school directors, teachers, pedagogical institute representatives and students are involved in the process; and several instruments such as the Coordination Board for the Interim Agreement on Returnee Children and the Common Core Curriculum Steering Board, have been established to facilitate local authority ownership in the implementation process. Unfortunately, the international community remains the driving force behind ensuring that reform happens, and happens across BiH for all students. Information on reform efforts is rarely forthcoming from local authorities to school directors, teacher unions, students and the general public, and a large bulk of the work is done either behind the scenes by the IC or through IC projects. If the IC stops pushing and providing significant financing for the reform process, one may legitimately fear that education reform will stagnate.

## **Pledge 1**

**“We will ensure that all children have access to quality education, in integrated multicultural schools, that is free from political, religious, cultural and other bias and discrimination and which respects the rights of all children.”**

**Providing returnee children with ready access to education, in integrated multicultural schools in their area of return, that is free from political, religious and cultural bias and discrimination**

### ***Progress report:***

- (+) Comprehensive Implementation Plan developed for the March 5<sup>th</sup> 2002 Interim Agreement on Accommodation of Specific Needs and Rights of Returnee Children and endorsed by entity and cantonal education ministers
- (+) Distribution of Interim Agreement on Returnee Children to all schools and organization of initial consultations with returnee parents, teachers and students
- (-) Increase the number of returnee/minority domicile teachers hired by issuing teaching vacancies in areas of return and displacement
- (-) Remove inappropriate symbols and objects from schools and replace school names which may create an unwelcoming environment for returnee students and teachers
- (+) Initial assessment of national subject textbooks by the Inter-Entity Textbook Review Commission in order to recommend removal of inappropriate content by September 2003
- (-) Issuance of an instruction by entity and cantonal education ministers on the harmonization of the national composition of school boards with the national composition of students and teachers
- (+) Collect preliminary statistics on the number of returnee students and teachers in primary and secondary schools throughout BiH
- (-) Major steps towards unification and de-segregation of existing “two-school-under-one-roof” in the Federation

*Next steps:*

- Significantly increase the numbers of returnee students and teachers by eliminating bussing of returnee children outside their area of return to mono-ethnic schools
- Complete textbook review process in order to remove inappropriate content from textbooks for the national group of subjects in time for the 2003/04 school year
- Harmonise the ethnic composition of school board members with the ethnic composition of the school population for the 2003/04 school year
- Collect data on returnee students and teachers for the 2003/04 school year in order to measure implementation progress of the Interim Agreement on Returnee Children
- Remove potentially offensive symbols from schools and change school names where deemed to be inappropriate
- Fully unify existing “two-schools-under-one-roof” with the goal of common classrooms, teachers and curriculum for all students

**Ensuring that all children who are members of national minorities (particularly Romani children) are appropriately included in the education system throughout the country**

*Progress report:*

- (+) Task Force on the Education Needs of Roma and National Minorities now collecting data on the number of national minority/Romani parents requesting the organization of extra-curricular language classes

*Next steps:*

- Further assess the educational needs of children belonging to national minorities (particularly Romani children)
- Develop a comprehensive implementation plan to address the educational needs of national minority and Romani children

## **Ensuring that all children have the opportunity to complete primary education**

### *Progress report:*

- (+) Task Force on School Enrolment and Completion now collecting data on school non-enrolment and non-completion

### *Next steps:*

- Analyse data and develop an implementation plan to ensure primary school completion for all children and to remove obstacles to the enrolment and inclusion of all children

## **Including children with special needs at all levels of the education system**

### *Progress report:*

- (+) Task Force on Inclusive Education currently developing mechanisms to identify the number of children with special needs in general classrooms and recommending ways to facilitate inclusion of children with special needs
- (+) Masters degree program in inclusive education established and training new students

### *Next steps:*

- Identify the number of children with special needs in general classrooms in all pre-and primary schools in BiH
- Develop an implementation plan to increase public awareness, to implement teacher training programs and to revise the current classification system for children with special needs

## **Pledge 2**

**“We will provide basic education of good quality at the pre-school, primary and general secondary levels, with a modern curriculum and a modern system of assessment and certification for students and teachers. We will ensure that students are taught by well-trained teachers, in properly equipped and efficiently managed schools.”**

## **Establishing countrywide, affordable and accessible pre-school education**

### *Progress report:*

- (+) Analysis on current pre-school legislation and cost structures underway

### *Next steps:*

- Set up a framework for pre-school education based on the analysis of current legislation and cost structures by July 2003

## **Developing a modern curriculum framework for all levels of primary and general secondary school education, encompassing the entire range of subjects, and focussing on relevant and contemporary knowledge, skills and attitudes to enable students to face the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

### *Progress report:*

- (+) Common Core Curriculum Steering Board and subject-specific working groups established and harmonising curriculum for each subject area

### *Next steps:*

- Implement to the greatest extent possible a Common Core Curriculum by September 2003 to enable pupils throughout BiH to go to school together. Results may only partially be implemented by September 2003, and strong political support will be required for this key element of the Education Reform Strategy and the draft framework state-level Law for Primary and Secondary Education
- Commence modernisation of curriculum and teaching methods by training local experts in modern curriculum development and developing recommendations in the “White Paper” for modern core curriculum and the Curriculum Agency

## **Ensuring that the quality of teaching reaches, and remains at, acceptable standards throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina.**

### *Progress report:*

- (+) Comparative analysis of current systems in the entities and Brčko district for licensing of teachers and professional development underway



- (+) Establishment of seven in-service primary school training centers throughout the country

*Next steps:*

- Develop a conceptual framework for licensing, accreditation and certification procedures by July 2003
- Establish six additional primary school training centers in BiH by October 2003
- Continue development of the Institute for Initiatives in Democracy and Human Rights and develop curriculum for training, qualification criteria and an accreditation process for civic education teachers

**Reviewing and achieving agreed minimum standards for pre-school and school facilities, including standards of safety, hygiene, equipment and learning materials and ensuring compliance with those standards within three years**

*Progress report:*  
*none*

*Next steps:*

- Group of experts being identified to review and develop standards for pre, primary and secondary schools, to oversee an audit of school facilities and equipment and to set achievable targets for improving standards in pre- and primary school in 2003 and secondary schools in 2004

**Improving the quality of management practices to ensure that pre-schools and schools are managed in a modern, democratic and inclusive manner**

*Progress report:*  
*none*

*Next steps:*

- Provide recommendations for school management in the “White Paper” in line with the state-level Law on Primary and Secondary Education to be piloted in 2004 and implemented in all schools in 2006

### **Pledge 3**

**“We will support the economic development of Bosnia and Herzegovina through the development of a modern, broad-based, flexible and high-quality vocational education and training system that is responsive to labour market requirements.”**

**Improving vocational education and training to ensure that these activities are responsive to labour market needs, well integrated with the primary, general secondary and higher education systems and based on the principles of life-long-learning**

#### **Rationalisation and Modernisation**

##### ***Progress report:***

- (-) Rationalisation of vocational education system into broad occupational categories proceeding slowly; additional IC technical assistance is required
- (+) Collection of data in progress on occupations offered at schools in order to update official list of occupations and regroup into broader occupational categories
- (+) New modernised curricula have been developed for six occupational profiles (baker, cook, tailor, waiter, clerk and electrician) and implemented in 30 pilot schools
- (+) Based on labour market surveys, agriculture and food processing sectors were identified as high priority areas for rationalisation of occupations and 24 schools and EU partner schools identified to develop a framework model for rationalisation and modernisation in the agriculture and food processing sectors (all schools within these two sectors are included in this project)

##### ***Next steps:***

- Expand pilot projects of above-mentioned six modernised curricula to other schools offering education in these areas
- Start modernisation of curricula for the pilot occupational categories of food processing and agriculture

- Develop criteria for IC additional funds to be made available for school based projects which will promote broader occupational categories.

### **Labour Market Responsiveness and Information System**

#### ***Progress report:***

- (-) Slow progress due to lack of comprehensive data on labour market needs
- (+) Launch of restricted tender for the development and implementation of specialized, labour market oriented training for adults
- (+) Manual developed on how to conduct labour market surveys in close coordination with Employment Service and vocational schools representatives
- (+) 25 regional labour market surveys conducted by vocational education schools and Employment Service representatives all over BiH

#### ***Next steps:***

- Improve labour market information system by enhancing the Employment Service's administrative statistical capacities in labour market monitoring
- Enhance co-operation with social partners and labor organisations, including employers
- Include principle of responsiveness to labour market into draft vocational education legislation

### **Ensuring teaching of high quality in vocational education and training institutions in BiH**

#### ***Progress report:***

- (+) Substantial numbers of BiH mentors trained in new curriculum development methodology and teaching methods

#### ***Next steps:***

- Provide training in modern curriculum development and teaching methodology to teachers and school directors from 25 agriculture and food processing vocational education schools

**Ensuring that educational and training schools are managed in a modern, democratic and inclusive way, and in close association with employers, parents and other stakeholders**

*Progress report:*

- (+) Local stakeholders defined recommendations for responsibilities of school management and composition of school boards to be included in new vocational education legislation
- (+) Local stakeholders agreed on the development of a legal and financial framework that encourages employers to provide work practice and enables schools to engage in commercial activities

*Next steps:*

- Draft relevant provisions which incorporate above recommendations to be included in new state-level framework law on vocational education by October 2003
- Promote increased student and parent participation by developing terms of reference for parent and student councils
- Establish tri-partite advisory councils (employers/trade unions/government officials) in order to ensure links between vocational education schools and the labour market

**Pledge 4**

**“We will raise the quality of higher education and research in BiH, significantly increase the number of people with access to higher education, and ensure the full participation of the universities of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the European Higher Education Area.”**

*Progress report:*

- (+) Entity ministries of education signed a joint application letter for signing the Bologna Declaration and submitted review on progress to date and implementation plan for Bologna Declaration principles
- (+) Framework state-level Law on Higher Education drafted which underpins the higher education reform by promoting the principles of quality (including the establishment of a quality assurance system), mobility, university autonomy and increased rights for students and

professors in line with the Bologna Declaration and Lisbon Recognition Convention

*Next steps:*

- Adopt by September 2003 and implement the state-level draft framework Law on Higher Education
- Establish a public reporting system on modernisation and mobility in line with the Bologna Declaration and Lisbon Recognition Convention

**Giving universities autonomy in decision-making and ensuring accountability to their stakeholders for the quality of their teaching; the welfare of their students; the standard of their research; the professional development of their staff and cost-effectiveness of their administrative and management operations**

*Progress report:*

- (-) Consensus among faculty deans for restructuring universities not yet achieved
- (+) Model for BiH-wide student union developed

*Next steps:*

- Modify university statutes and institutional development plans in accordance with new legislative framework
- Modernise university structures and management
- Develop strategic planning and leadership capabilities for integrated universities through external institutional review of universities and manager training

**Improving the quality of university-level teaching and learning, with a view to achieving standards consistent with practices elsewhere in Europe**

*Progress report:*

- (+) IC projects providing technical assistance towards development of modern curricula and teaching methods
- (+) Distance learning centres established at two universities (Tuzla and Sarajevo)

- (+) eLearning Task Force established to develop policy for eLearning technologies and practices in BiH

***Next steps:***

- Develop quality assurance mechanisms
- Develop study programs based on modular curricula, labour market relevance and credit transfer in line with the Bologna Declaration principles
- Improve links between universities, local markets and employers
- Conduct overall quality assessment for existing study programs with particular reference to labour market relevance
- Seek assistance to improve teacher training capacity

**Fostering the mobility of students and academics within BiH and abroad**

***Progress report:***

- (+) BiH Council of Ministers endorsed the Lisbon Recognition Convention which must be signed and ratified in line with BiH's post-accession commitments to the Council of Europe
- (+) Common template for explanatory transcript (Diploma Supplement) developed by the Higher Education Coordination Board

***Next steps:***

- Establish a Centre for Recognition of Academic Qualifications in BiH
- Introduce Diploma Supplement at BiH universities
- Sign, ratify and implement the Lisbon Recognition Convention
- Develop an implementation plan for the introduction of a two-tiered degree system and European Credit Transfer System in line with Bologna Declaration principles

**Promoting research that will improve the academic process and support social and economic development.**

*Progress report:*

none

*Next steps:*

- Develop new legislation for scientific research
- Start negotiations with relevant authorities in order to allocate at least 2% of public budgets to research and to ensure tax benefits for scientific institutions and individuals conducting scientific research
- Strengthen the scientific and research activities of the students and academic staff

## **Pledge 5**

**“We will ensure the transparent, equitable, cost-effective and financially sustainable investment of public resources, and implement education legislation at all levels that is based on European standards and norms and grounded in international human rights conventions.”**

**Improving the cost-effectiveness of spending and the efficiency of budget allocations to and within the educational system, and ensuring equity of public financing in education across regions and between levels of income**

*Progress report:*

- (-) No acceptance to date at the level of the Federation of BiH of the principle of entity-level financing responsibility for higher education

*Next steps:*

- Achieve acceptance of the principle of entity-level financing responsibility for higher education by all relevant levels of Government in the Federation of BiH
- Complete review of expenditure assignments across all levels of Government and proceed to reassignments as indicated by cost-effectiveness criteria

- Implement reassignment of higher level education to the entity level, including matching re-allocations of revenues in the Federation
- Design and begin to implement policy for the reallocation of efficiency gains towards non-wage spending, while maintaining strict control, if not reducing, the wage bill and complying with overall hard budget constraints
- Begin design and implementation of an affordable student fee/loan/scholarship system
- Examine feasibility of equalization funds (either budget-wide or sector specific) to correct for imbalances in spending

### **Improving the management of public expenditure throughout the budgetary cycle and developing alternative financing mechanisms and sources of service delivery**

#### *Progress report:*

- (+) Analytical review of formulas for budget determination conducted
- (+) Increased budget transparency achieved through gradual inclusion of education institutions in the Treasury system
- (+) Launch of initiatives to improve budget disciplines (e.g. Treasury system introduced at cantonal level; public procurement reform underway)

#### *Next steps:*

- Adopt new funding methods and move away from input-based funding formulas, and adopt realistic budgets at entity and sub-entity levels
- Ensure comprehensive budgeting and reporting from education institutions generating their own revenue; enforce strict accountability standards on the use of all revenues
- Adopt, in the framework of the PRSP, medium-term expenditure plans at the entity-level, and prepare 2004 budgets in full consistency with the plan
- Adopt and implement guidelines for the collection, consolidation and reporting of education expenditure data at the entity-level, as produced by consolidated expenditure reports for the 2003 budget execution
- Adopt and implement new public procurement legislation



**Implementing a state-level law on education in primary and secondary schools, as prescribed in the Council of Europe post-accession commitments, and implementing the human rights and educational principles embedded in this law by adopting laws in the Entities and Cantons that are consistent with it**

*Progress report:*

- (+) Draft state-level law developed, adopted by the BiH Council of Ministers and submitted to parliamentary process under an urgent procedure
- (-) Process behind initial schedule but there is a good chance it will be adopted before the summer
- (+) Drafting process of a “prototype law” for entity and cantonal levels has begun in preparation for adoption of framework law

*Next steps:*

- Closely monitor parliamentary process in order to get the draft law adopted in June 2003 with minimal damage to strategic articles (such as catchment areas, Common Core Curriculum, human rights principles) and monitor implementation of these articles
- Complete drafting of a “prototype law” (set of recommendations and guidelines) which can be used as a model for developing consistent lower level legislation reflecting the principles embedded in the framework law, with a view to having entity and cantonal laws modified and adopted within six months
- Continue support to the development of a key element of this law, i.e. the Common Core Curriculum, and develop for it an implementation plan, in particular for the “national subjects”
- Carry out study to assess feasibility of the Curriculum Agency foreseen in the law

**Implementing contemporary legislation for both higher education and vocational and technical education that is consistent with the highest European standards of quality, equity and governance and in keeping with the priority needs of the country**

***Progress report:***

- (+) State-level draft framework law on higher education has been drafted, was submitted to stakeholders and the public for consultation and is scheduled to enter the parliamentary process in July 2003
- (-) No progress to date on the crucial deferral of power in terms of higher education policy determination and funding from the cantons to the Federation
- (+) Preparations under way to draft state-level framework law on vocational education and training

***Next steps:***

- Finalise draft framework law on higher education to be submitted to the BiH Council of Ministers and the Parliament
- Generate public support for dramatic changes to be made in the whole higher education sector
- Prepare the ground for facilitating the deferral of power from cantons to the Federation level (Ministries of Finance and Education) by providing strong political support to local authorities
- Start developing Entity-level legislation for higher education consistent with the state-level law in order to complete process before the end of 2003
- Drafting of state-level framework law on vocational education and training to be completed in October 2003; process to be followed by the development of consistent lower level legislation

**Implement modern legislation for pre-school education, and consider the development of contemporary legislation and instruments for adult education and lifelong learning**

***Progress report:***

None

***Next steps:***

- Begin consultations within four months for developing policy and legislation recommendations for the area of adult education and a domestic life-long learning capacity

- Begin consultations within six months for initiating process of developing modern legislation for pre-primary education