

OSCE PRESENTATION

 ORGANISATION FOR SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

Facts and figures

With 56 participating States from Europe, Central Asia and North America, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) forms the largest regional security organization in the world – spanning the geographical area from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

The OSCE is a primary instrument for early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation in its area. It has 19 missions or field operations in South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

A comprehensive security concept

The Organization deals with three dimensions of security - the politico-military, the economic and environmental, and the human dimension. It therefore addresses a wide range of security-related concerns, including arms control, confidence- and security-building measures, human rights, national minorities, democratization, policing strategies, counter-terrorism and economic and environmental activities. All 56 participating States enjoy equal status, and decisions are taken by consensus on a politically, but not legally binding basis.

contributes to the long – term stability and security of the country”.

Education reform in BaH

OSCE Support for the Education Reform Process

Why is Education Reform Needed?

In October 2007, the OSCE Mission to BaH posted on its website the text of a presentation that was delivered at the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's annual autumn meetings in Portoroz, Slovenia; these meetings focused on *Security Through Cooperation in South-East Europe: The Role of Parliamentarians*. The title of this presentation was:

EDUCATION IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA: A NEGLECTED SECURITY ISSUE

I would like to quote from this presentation.

"In this presentation I would like to highlight that in present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina, the way children are educated poses a threat to the long-term stability of the country.

Unfortunately, this connection between education, security, and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina was not made when it should have been -- in the early days of post-war reconstruction. This is perhaps not surprising. In the aftermath of armed conflicts that cause significant loss of human life, physical destruction, and displacement of people, education is rarely seen as a domain in need of immediate intervention. The restoration of security, the rebuilding of institutions, and the repair of the social fabric generally take precedence.

This was the case in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Because of the destruction wrought by the war in much of the country, the international community was focused primarily on the reconstruction of the physical landscape and assistance to institutions that were seen as the priority for the state's successful functioning. The education sector did not get much attention beyond a focus on basic infrastructure. Funds were made available for the reconstruction of schools. But, what was taught inside those schools was rarely -- if ever -- examined. In this way, the international community failed to respond to war-time curricula that contained messages not in line with the Dayton (Peace) Agreement. It failed to notice that from the early days of post-war reconstruction, schools began to pose a threat to the country's long-term peace and stability.

This started to change in the late 1990s. Then, the international community was concerned about the return of refugees. It realized that access to education was one of the things it needed to provide to those returning to still ethnically segregated communities. This connection between the refugee returns, access to education, and stability is best illustrated by the Human Rights Co-ordination Center notes from its 1999 overview: "major problem lies in the effective division of the education system along ethnic lines, which acts to inhibit

sustainable minority return and ethnic re-integration; further, it encourages future destabilization through radicalizing, and thus polarizing, another generation of citizens.”

Unfortunately, however, the situation does not look much different in the present day. Dayton may have ended the war, but it did not end ethnic divisions or nationalist ideologies. The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights recently estimated that only one third of the total number of refugees and displaced persons has returned to the places in which they actually resided before the war. Only two municipalities – Tuzla and Sarajevo Center – were noted to have a minority population amounting to more than 10 per cent of the total population. This led the Committee to conclude that ‘ethnic cleansing’ was at its final stage in Bosnia and Herzegovina.’

It thus appears that over the past twelve years schools -- instead of promoting post-conflict reconciliation -- have helped to separate the three so-called constitutive peoples from one another. Since the war, young Bosniac, Croat, and Serb students have largely sat – and continue to sit – in classrooms populated by members of the same ethnic group. As a consequence, many of these students have little understanding of the other ethnic groups or national minorities that also live in the country. Thanks to their schooling, some students develop allegiance not to the country as a whole but just to those parts in which their group forms the majority. Some also develop allegiance to the neighboring countries to the east and west in which the members of their particular group predominate.

This feeling of alienation among its students from one another and from, in many cases, the very country in which they reside does not seem to bode well for the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It seems that the recent war is still being fought in more subtle ways in the schools. As such, education has of necessity become an issue of the security of the state.

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If education is indeed a means to resolve conflict, then it may be time for the international community more explicitly to seek – to borrow a term from the Copenhagen School of Security Studies – to ‘securitize’ education. In other words, it may be time to try to frame the debate about education in Bosnia and Herzegovina in different terms. These terms should point to its importance not only for the long-term stability of the country but also for the region. This might mean that the international community should now cease arguing that phenomena such as ‘two schools under one roof’ and the ‘national group of subjects’ are in contradiction with ‘modernised curricula’ or ‘European values’ and instead suggest that they are detrimental to the stability of individual cantons, entities, the state, and finally, the region.”

There is a further reason, the presentation states, for the current dysfunctionality of the state – that also constitutes a threat to its long term stability and security – and that is the excessive fragmentation of its authority in the area of education:

“There appears to be no single European standard for the organisation of education. European models range from vesting competencies for education in powerful central state ministries to leaving them in the hands of provincial governments, local authorities, or even ethnic

and religious groups. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the responsibility for education lies in a sense with all of the above. This is clearly not a formula for success.

The General Framework Agreement for Peace affirmed the existence of Bosnia and Herzegovina as an independent state consisting of two entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska. It vested the majority of powers in these two entities or their constituent parts. These vested powers include education. In practical terms, this means that the country has fourteen Ministries of Education – one at the state level (the Ministry of Civil Affairs), one in each entity, and one in each of the ten cantons of the Federation. The independent District of Brčko, of course, has its own Department of Education too.

Decentralisation in itself is not necessarily a vice and centralisation not necessarily a virtue. As the European Commission's Functional Review of the Education Sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which it issued March 2005, noted, decentralisation of educational competencies is in fact the trend in Europe, where, it pointed out, 'local municipalities and schools are given greater autonomy concerning education management, increasing schools' control over financing, administration, curriculum design, and teaching arrangements'. Unfortunately, however, in Bosnia and Herzegovina this 'European standard' is proving to be destabilising. This is because at least some of the local authorities view ethnic segregation as a way of protecting and preserving their particular ethnic group; decentralisation of education, then, is only adding to the ethnic separation of the populace. As a result, education in Bosnia and Herzegovina is in danger of becoming a security issue because it is hindering the development of a stable and functional democratic state."

- Non-political Reasons

- Vast disparities across the country in terms of quality, access and implementation of legislation(as a result of Dayton there are 12 Ministries of Education with real competencies in a small country with fewer than 4 million residents)
- Skills learned are not always relevant to a modern economy or modern labour market requirements(this is especially true for the vocational education sector which is attended by nearly 75% of all secondary school students)
- There is a premium on rote learning rather than on the acquisition of critical thinking skills, problem – solving skills and creativity
- Little to no money has been invested in teacher training over the past 15 years
- Money spent on education is not used efficiently; 90 % of education budgets is used exclusively for salaries
- There is a high brain drain phenomenon(according to UNDP over 63% of the young people would leave the country if given an opportunity)

This points to the need for a transition-focused reform

- Political Reasons

- Children of different ethnic origins and abilities often cannot attend the same schools without fear of discrimination or segregation

- Curricula are ethnically biased and non – inclusive; they are unsuited for post-Dayton reconstruction, confidence – building and reconciliation
- As a result of the war the most common feature in the education sector is the mono-ethnic school; most students attend such schools where they do not acquire the necessary inter-cultural and inter-religious skills that they would need to live and work in a multi-ethnic society
 - *How stable and secure can a post-war state be when children learn according to three different and separate curricula? How can this contribute to develop a sense of citizenship and belonging to their own country?*

This points to the need for specific post-war reform

BaH’s Key Education Commitments

1. BaH’s international obligations include the Bologna Process, the Lisbon Recognition Convention – both for higher education - , the country’s Council of Europe post-accession commitments (“elimination of all forms of discrimination and segregation based on ethnic origin”), the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms(part of BaH ‘s constitution), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the European Partnership Document and other requirements emerging from the SAA process(Stabilisation and Association Agreement, the initial gateway to eventual EU membership)
2. The State-level Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education (adopted in June 2003) and Lower-level Laws(Republika Srpska, 10 Cantons, District of Brcko levels)
3. The Education Reform Strategy presented to the Peace Implementation Council- PIC - by the local authorities (21 November 2002)

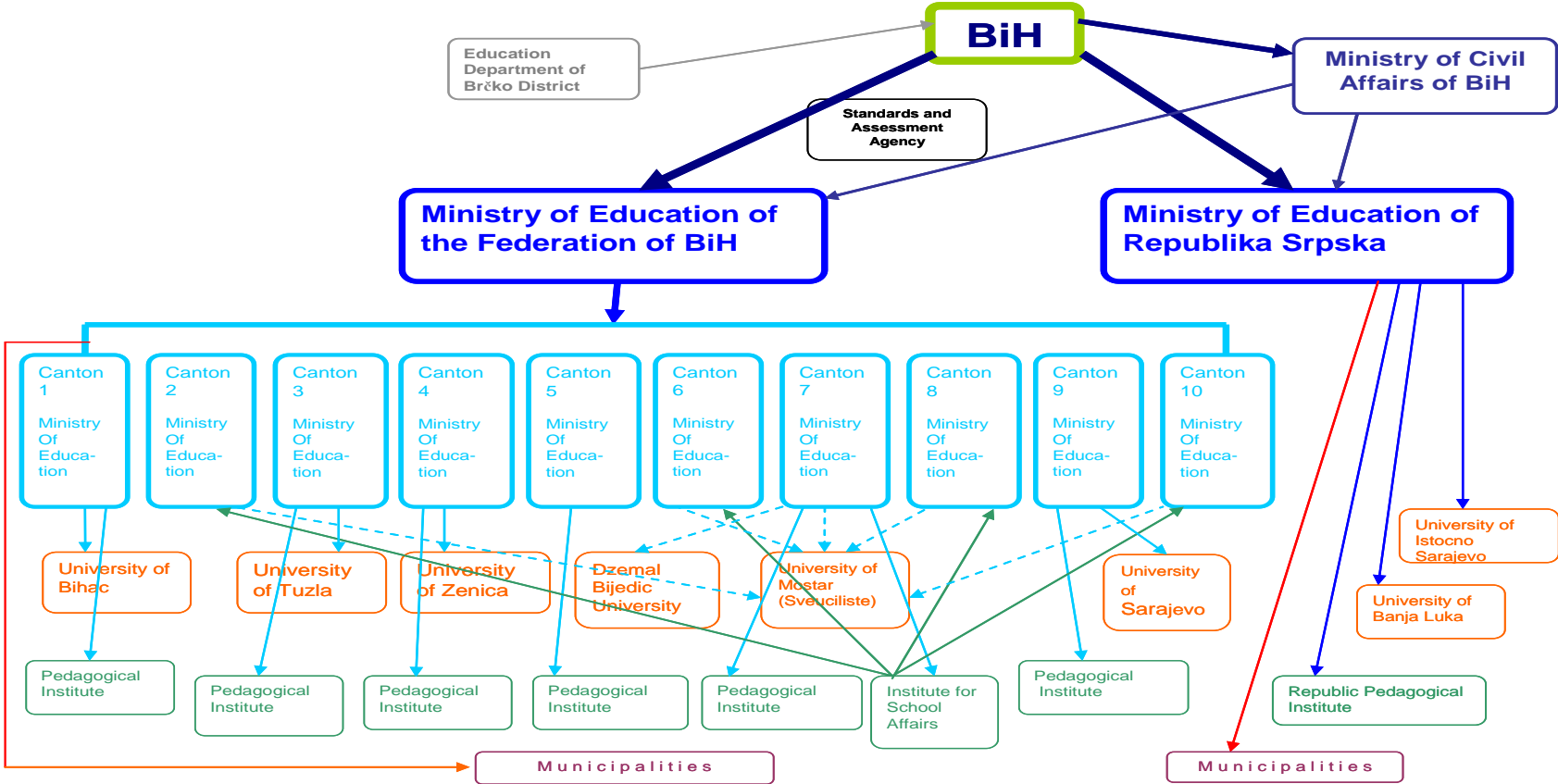
N.B. Many provisions from these commitments or laws to date remain un-implemented or completely ignored which raises a rule of law issue, and testifies to the non-functionality of this decentralized state whose commitments and obligations remain unheeded by lower level jurisdictions which have the necessary competencies and power to implement them.

The OSCE Mission's Involvement in Education Reform

- Dedicated Programme established in 2002
- 55 professionals located in Head Office and in 14 field offices throughout BaH
- The only organization with the ability to track implementation progress at the school and community level(as most other international organisations' field offices have been downsized or closed in the past few years, the OSCE field structure has become “ the eyes and ears” of the International Community)
- The focus of the education programme is on monitoring and reporting on the situation and encouraging, assisting and lobbying the authorities of BaH to comply with their obligations and commitments

STRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

I N T E R - M I N I S T E R I A L C O O R D I N A T I O N B O A R D



Overall Education Reform Goal

To promote political and legislative changes so that BaH develops a holistic education system that is accessible, acceptable and effective for all citizens, irrespective of their ethnic origin or status, and thus contributes to the long-term stability and security of the country.

Two Main Priorities

- The establishment of a state-level agency that can both set and enforce single curriculum and assessment/achievement standards throughout the country
- The development of a standardized curriculum to be used throughout BaH that ensures that children learn according to the same standards, including a choice of electives

Both priorities are part of an incremental process of changing politics, structures, hearts and minds

Programmatic Organization

- Portfolio 1:** Coordination and political support to reform
- Portfolio 2:** Legislation
- Portfolio 3:** Access and Non-discrimination
- Portfolio 4:** Civic involvement in the education reform process
- Portfolio 5:** Finance and Management

Coordination / Political Support to Reform

- Advocate for the State to play a meaningful role in the process of education reform to increasingly ensure a sustainable education system for all BaH citizens.
- Encourage greater local ownership and advocate for an effective state-level mechanism to coordinate and implement education reform and to assist the authorities of BaH to comply with domestic and international obligations and commitments.
- Promote public discussions and activism, ensuring that education reform discussions and debates enjoy greater general prominence in society.

Legislation

- Monitor and report on the implementation of domestic legislation and application of international standards as BaH commitments in the field of education.
- Strengthen domestic mechanisms in the field of education to ensure respect of the rule of law (school management, Education Inspectors, Administrative Inspectors, local Human Rights NGO – VASA PRAVA, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, Transparency International, Ombudsmen, Coordination Board for the Implementation of the Interim Agreement on Accommodation of the Rights and Needs of Returnee Children, competent courts, etc).
- Advocate and provide political support for adoption of needed state level laws (Council of Ministers, Ministry of Civil Affairs).

Access and Non-Discrimination

- Promote the responsiveness of schools and civic society to the diversity of educational needs of all children and encourage permanent solutions for the “national” group of subjects and related curricular initiatives.
- Promote implementation and raise public awareness of adopted documents such as the Criteria for School Names and Symbols, the History and Geography Textbooks Guidelines and various other Action Plans (Examples: Action Plan on the Educational Needs of Roma and Members of Other National Minorities, Action Plan on School Enrolment and Completion, Action Plan on Children with Special Needs)
- Monitor and report on access and non-discrimination related issues which form an integral part of BaH’s international commitments in the field of education.

Civic Involvement in the Education Reform Process

- Provide political and facilitative support to education-related civic groups (student councils, parent councils, parent-teacher associations, etc.) so they can act as counterparts in democratic and balanced decision-making and promote accountability and responsible citizenship at school level.
- Raise awareness of the role of school boards in the educational management process; facilitate school board members’ training.
- Work through local implementing partners towards local ownership of the ongoing process of education reform, development and implementation.

Finance and Management

- Support and assist the rationalization of the education system so that the structure and management of the system is organized in an increasingly apolitical, cost-effective, ethnicity-blind and self-sustainable manner.
- Catchment area/bussing report (complete disrespect of the principle of catchment area; trend to enroll children in mono-ethnic schools; lack of inclusive curricula)
- Awareness raising campaigns on how public resources are spent in the education sector (inefficiency, political interference, lack of capacity and skills to improve the management of schools and education systems)

- ❑ Rationalization of school networks(costly, inefficient networks of branch schools inherited from the former Yugoslav system)

Key Accomplishments to Date

- Implementation of the Interim Agreement on the Rights and Needs of Returnee Children(endorsed in 2002)
- Criteria for School Names and Symbols
- Primary and Secondary Education laws adopted on all levels (State, Entities, Cantons and District of Brčko)
- Higher Education law adopted in June 2007
- “Common Core Curriculum” in schools(initial phase)
- Textbook Commissions and Guidelines for Writing and Evaluating History and Geography Textbooks
- Increased numbers of Roma children enrolled in schools
- Strengthened school civic bodies promoting transparent, democratic practices at local school level

Focus on the Future

- A State-Level Education Agency is established to ensure single education standards for the whole country
- Effective mechanisms for education ministers to coordinate – country-wide - and take forward education reform in a highly decentralized state are in place and functioning
- Citizens are engaged in ensuring an education system that works for all, is inclusive , respects the national diversity and imparts a sense of BaH citizenship
- An education system that will help BaH’s post-war, pre-EU, democratic consolidation process and assure its long term stability and security is gradually put in place

LESSONS LEARNT

- Lack of understanding of the importance of a “ soft” issue such as education for post – conflict rehabilitation; the IC was probably reluctant to tackle this sector which was considered highly sensitive(related with issues such as identity, culture, etc)
- Education reform in its political aspects should have become an immediate post – war priority to the same extent as, for instance, refugee return, reconstruction of houses and infrastructure and assuring the peoples’ physical security
- Many years were lost before the IC started to seriously consider tackling this sector although it never became a high level priority; by that time – in 2002 - the nationalist, non inclusive curricula which emerged from the war were entrenched and accepted by most of the population as something inevitable or even – at least in some quarters – desirable
- An Education for Peace(EFP Balkans) programme implemented at the school level, involving whole school communities including parents, students, teachers, school administrators and staff - as it was successfully implemented as from 2000 with the full support of all the Ministries of Education – should have been properly funded over a

decade, extended early on to all schools in the country, and matched with systemic institutional reform and capacity building at all levels (ministries, pedagogical institutes, new institutions as needed)

- Missed opportunities in the past and endemic lack of local political will and leadership have now led to a situation where no one knows what shape and form the future state of BaH will take; even if the country amends its constitution, and signs an Association and Stabilization Agreement – SAA – with the EU – the next stage on the path towards EU integration supported by over 70% of the total population of BaH – , the existing separate education systems will continue churning out little “soldiers” devoted to an ethnic cause and lacking the skills to live and work in a multi-national, multi-religious environment which may well drive the country towards eventual disintegration
- Education reform will probably just muddle on as it is highly doubtful that it will become a priority for the IC nearly 13 years after the end of the war; furthermore no amount of EC technical assistance or public administration reform – the EU’s preferred approach – is likely to overcome the local politicians’ tacit support for lasting ethnic separation
- All of this probably means that we will have to live with an unstable Bosnia and Herzegovina for a long time to come – probably within a relatively unstable region: consider the status of Kosovo, the political uncertainty shrouding the future of Serbia, the relative instability of Macedonia, thriving organised crime in the whole region, large scale trafficking of human beings, the potential threat of terrorism, the general absence of the rule of law; BaH will probably continue teetering from one political crisis to another on its wearisome and uncertain journey towards EU integration.