

## **Modernizing History Teaching (textbooks and curriculum)**

### Justification

The division of curricula into three different and often mutually-opposed versions of history poses a considerable threat to the possibility of a shared sense of citizenship and future social cohesion in BiH. This situation manifests itself most evidently in BiH's history textbook industry, where the selection and content of textbooks remains highly politicized. Although the situation slightly improves with the publication of each new generation of history textbooks, they often remain marked by offensive language and ethnic intolerance, and actively promote competing narratives of victimhood. Recognizing the importance of history teaching in a post-conflict society and the role of history as a key component of people's identity, the Mission has been working with other international organizations, notably the Council of Europe and the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research, on modernizing history teaching through the improvement of textbooks used in schools in BiH.

### Groundwork

Since 1999 the International Community and the Ministries of Education of BiH have been addressing the issue of reforming history teaching in BiH. As a result of these efforts, a number of positive developments have taken place. Supported by the Mission, the Guidelines for Textbook Writing and Evaluation of History Textbooks for Primary and Secondary Schools in BiH were developed by a group of local experts, and adopted by all MoEs. Significant changes have appeared in a limited number of regions, which have acknowledged the Guidelines as a source of progress. A new and substantially improved generation of textbooks has now been published in accordance with the guidelines, while as a result of the joint Council of Europe and OSCE effort, a Teacher Manual on modern history teaching in schools was developed, published and distributed to schools. This helps teachers understand the methodological and conceptual shifts that have taken place for new textbooks following the European history teaching trends over the last decade.

### Current Activities

To build on and cement these achievements, the Mission has launched a three-year extra-budgetary project funded by France, Austria, Hungary, Switzerland and the Open Society Foundation. The project is titled "History for the Future – Towards Reconciliation through Education", and seeks to establish common principles and standards for teaching history for the whole country ensuring a common base of knowledge, culture and values for all students. This ultimately promotes social cohesion and a vision of a peaceful future for the country.