

A Message to the People of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Education Reform

Our educational system is crucial to the development of our country's intellectual capital. Our young people must be confident that they can receive the quality education that they require to open the door to the future – here at home.

We know that the education system in BiH is in urgent need of modernisation. It has fallen behind the rest of Europe. We need to make a combined and sustained effort to enhance the quality of education across the board.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's last and best chance for a viable future hinges on its young people. If they decide to desert it in search of better educational opportunities elsewhere, or if they conclude that they cannot compete in the region or the wider world, the country's future will be bleak.

We must start by taking politics out of the classroom, where it has no place. Instead, we should concentrate on doing what is necessary to develop and enhance the quality of education, and to ensure that this enhanced education is available to all, fairly and without discrimination.

There is no place for an education system in our country that divides and segregates children on an ethnic basis. Our education system must enable our children to go to school together, so that they can learn to respect and cherish the precious cultural diversity that makes our country unique.

The education system must also train our primary and secondary school children to live and work in a constantly changing world. But in BiH, our curricula are overloaded, our teaching methods require updating, and too often learning is based on the mechanistic transmission of large quantities of facts. All this must change. Education for Europe and the world in the 21st century requires critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving skills, entrepreneurship, and a command of new technologies.

Our university students, who are so important to the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina, are likewise too often faced with a system that does not properly prepare them to be successful in a highly competitive world. More attention needs to be paid to the acquisition of the skills and values that the modern university graduate requires and expects to receive. Our goal is to establish a higher education system with credible structures and instruments of effective governance, management and accountability. The Bologna Process offers a tested framework for university reform. We need to embrace and implement its crucial provisions if universities in BiH are to join the "European Area of Higher Education."

We must modernise the financing and management system and the legal framework, which underpin the education system.

Urgent reform is needed in all these areas.

The only way to accomplish this is through the commitment and active support of dedicated, hard-working and forward-looking professors, teachers, parents, administrators and political leaders in this country. Nothing can be achieved without them, and their efforts are already beginning to make a difference. We encourage everyone involved in the process of education reform to show how, together, we can move Bosnia and Herzegovina, and its young people, decisively towards the highest European standards.

Education: Our Mission

Reforming Education To Give BiH a Better Future

Our overriding objective is to depoliticise education, while creating the conditions that will ensure equal access to a high-quality, modern education throughout BiH.

Quality education is needed:

- 1. for the individual. It brings confidence and personal growth, as well as the skills, knowledge, values and attitudes that are critical for a young person to become a good and successful citizen.*
- 2. for the community. It produces an aware and engaged citizenry, an enhanced potential for prosperity, and a society that is both fair and just.*
- 3. for the country. As BiH strives to become a modern European state, quality education is essential to prosperity and progress.*

We aim to put an end to segregation and discrimination through education, and to encourage returnees with school-age children to continue to go back to their homes.

We aim to de-segregate education, while respecting the rich cultural diversity that is the hallmark of our country.

We aim to establish a system with a strong legal basis, in which the needs and interests of all children and students come first.

We will cut wastage, duplication and inefficiencies in BiH's education system.

We will incorporate the principle of inclusive education for children with special needs in all aspects of legislative and pedagogical reforms.

We will associate all the education stakeholders in these reforms, including students, parents and teachers, in a democratic and transparent manner.

We will energetically remove the bureaucratic and organisational impediments to the reform of our education system.

We will foster and reinforce innovation in the classroom at all levels, and promote the implementation of the provisions and criteria of the Bologna and Lisbon Convention processes in higher education.

This is our mission: reforming education to give our people a better future. Building on what has already been accomplished, we must now work together to finish the job.

Our pledges on Education

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. We will accomplish this by:

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.

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

Ensuring that all children have the opportunity to complete primary education.

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

Delivering on our pledges

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. We will accomplish this by:

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.

Implement the March 5th 2002 Interim Agreement on Accommodation of Specific Needs and Rights of Returnee Children (February 2003).

Develop long-term solutions for the education of all constituent peoples and persons belonging to national minorities (August 2003).

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

Ensure that the national minorities, and especially Roma, are enabled to define their own needs and support them in assessing what is necessary for successful education (March 2003).

Establish a flexible, BiH-wide implementation plan to include all children belonging to national minorities (in particular Roma children) within the educational system, addressing the problems of access, financing of textbooks and transportation (August 2003).

Ensuring that all children have the opportunity to complete primary education.

Undertake data collection on primary school enrolment and completion rates, so as to determine the reasons why a significant number of children of primary school age are not enrolling in or completing primary school in Bosnia and Herzegovina (August 2003).

Develop a flexible implementation plan to ensure primary school completion for all children and to remedy basic education gaps for young people, addressing such issues such as the location of schools and transportation, financing, community needs and alternative (non-formal) education channels (December 2003).

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

Assess the number of children with special needs and the difficulties they face in order to determine the challenges that impede their inclusion into the general classroom (December 2003).

Develop a plan to educate the community (including school boards, teachers, parents and students) with respect to the inclusion of children with special needs at all levels of the education system (August 2005).

Our pledges on Education

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, by:

Establishing countrywide, affordable and accessible pre-school education.

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

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

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.

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

Delivering on our pledges

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, by:

Establishing countrywide, affordable and accessible pre-school education.

Establish a multi-sectoral strategic planning group of experts in early childhood education to analyse current legislation and cost structures and develop a feasible structure for this sector for the future(2003).

Design a developmentally appropriate pre-school curriculum using appropriate expertise in contemporary principles of curriculum, in close consultation with experts and contemporary principles of education.(2003).

Increase progressively the number of pre-school age children receiving appropriate education (2010).

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 21st century.

Develop a modern curriculum for each subject in close consultation with education authorities and drawing on appropriate expertise in contemporary principles of curriculum, (2004-2010); in the initial stage, this will mean developing a common core curriculum to enable pupils throughout BiH to go to school together (July 2003).

Develop and implement a system of standardised assessment and certification of student achievement for the entire country (July 2006).

Continue technical support to the Standards and Assessment Agency in order to ensure that, consistent with the terms of the Lisbon Convention, a standardised secondary school leaving certificate (such as the “matura” examination, or equivalent) is developed (2006).

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

Ensure all teachers receive training in modern teaching methodologies within four years (2003-2006).

Develop standards and procedures for licensing and certifying pre-school and primary school teachers (2004) and secondary school teachers (2007).

Establish a network of in-service training centres and implement a system of in-service training, including accredited programmes for professional development of pre- and primary school teachers (2003) and secondary school teachers (2004).

Implement revised courses and systems for pre-service primary and general secondary teacher training, including significant practice teaching (2004-2005).

Develop and implement a program of pre- and in-service teacher training for children with special needs at all levels of education (2003-2004).

Revise the current classification system for children with special needs to ensure that contemporary principles of inclusive education are followed (2003).

Reviewing and enacting agreed minimum standards for pre-school and school facilities, including standards of safety, hygiene, equipment and learning materials. Our aim is to ensure compliance with those standards within three years.

Establish a representative group of experts to review and develop agreed codes and standards for pre-, primary and secondary schools (2003), and ensure that an audit of school facilities and equipment is conducted and achievable targets for improvement for pre- and primary schools (2003) and secondary schools (2004) are set.

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

Appoint school boards and school directors according to principles of fairness and consistent with the democratic process (2004).

Develop appropriate and contemporary models of educational management and management structures, and develop and implement a system of training for school executive staff and members of school boards (2003-2004).

Develop terms of reference for Parents' and Students' Councils (2003), and establish a Parents' Council and a Students' Council in every school and a Parents' Council in every pre-school (2004).

Our pledges on Education

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 labour market requirements, by:

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 lifelong learning.

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

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.

Delivering on our pledges

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 by:

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.

Rationalise the vocational education and training system into broad occupational categories in order to raise the quality and reduce costs.

Identify high-priority areas for rationalisation of occupations (February 2003).

Develop and test a pilot framework model for rationalisation and modernisation of one economic sector (April 2004) and rationalise and modernise six to eight occupational families (April 2006).

Develop broad, modern, flexible curricula that are consistent with EU standards.

Ensure that curricula are adjustable to changes in the labour market and responsive to the social and individual needs of youth and adults.

Develop and implement vocational education training curricula for at least six new occupations (September 2004).

Establish a vocational education and training standards and assessment department within the existing Standard and Assessment Agency (2006).

Establish a labour market information system.

Strengthen specialised post-secondary, labour-market-orientated training for adults and youth, including unemployed and displaced persons.

Develop a system where the possibility exists for both vertical and horizontal mobility within the educational structure (April 2006).

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

On an urgent basis, establish a system for initial and in-service training of teachers through both mentor training programmes and the teacher training institutions, and ensure that teachers within vocational education and training institutions have access to high quality training and retraining.

Include support for the professional, methodological and personal development of teachers within their training and retraining.

Establish a group of mentors trained in the new curriculum and teaching methodology in order to provide concrete support and advice to teachers (May 2003).

Systematically train teachers and managers in the new curriculum and teaching methodology.

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.

Devolve responsibility for schools, allowing school directors and teachers more flexibility to innovate in both the curriculum and the management of the school (2004).

Revise the composition of school boards and ensure the representation of social partners (2004).

Establish tripartite advisory councils (employers/trade unions/government officials) through legislation, in order to ensure links between schools and the labour market (2004).

Create a legal and financial framework to encourage employers to provide work practice (February 2004).

Create a legal and financial framework that will enable schools to engage in commercial activities (2004).

Our pledges on education

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, by:

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 the cost-effectiveness of their administrative and management operations.

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

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

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

Delivering on our pledges

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, by:

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.

Integrate universities through attributing legal status solely to the university as a whole, including the faculties and other academic units within that legal person (July 2004).

Give overall responsibility for the management of the entire university budget to the central decision-making body of that university (July 2004).

Professionalise the administration of universities and improve their management and governance capacity.

Provide for the institutional participation of students, academic and non-academic staff in internal decision-making processes (July 2004).

Support universities in developing strategic plans adapted to new higher education legislation.

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

Support the universities in undertaking and implementing the following reforms, and establish (December 2003) a reporting system on the implementation of these objectives:

Reform curricula, teaching and learning in ways that promote active participation, critical analysis, innovation and adaptability, using modes and methodologies including distance learning.

Attract more adult learners and promote lifelong learning by strengthening the labour-market relevance of curricula, updating or reorienting professional qualifications, placing a greater emphasis on practice and application, developing courses of shorter duration, and offering more opportunities for part-time study.

Increase the proportion of students successfully completing their studies within the intended time-scale.

Strengthen infrastructures at universities, in particular accommodation and services for out-of-town students.

Establish public and transparent mechanisms for quality assurance, including a procedure for the periodic external evaluation of universities (2004).

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

Support the universities in the following reforms, including the signing of the Bologna Declaration (September 2003), and signing and ratifying the Lisbon Convention (by April 2004) -- the latter in line with BiH's accession commitments to the Council of Europe -- and establishing a reporting system on the implementation of these objectives (December 2003).

Establish a system of equivalencies for the academic awards conferred by BiH universities, consistent with practice elsewhere in Europe.

Finalise the introduction of an explanatory transcript to accompany diplomas (the now standard "Diploma Supplement") at all universities (July 2003).

Accelerate the introduction of the European Credit Transfer System in order to complete the process for the majority of academic programs (July 2004).

Introduce procedures for the admission, assessment and certification of students that are open, transparent and accountable (July 2004).

Ensure that entrance to universities is regulated by a secondary school leaving certificate (such as the now standard "matura" examination or an equivalent) affording recognition through the Lisbon Convention (July 2006).

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

Strengthen scientific and research activities by allocating at least 2% of public budgets to research, developing new legislation for scientific research, and ensuring tax benefits for scientific institutions and individuals conducting scientific research (end of 2003).

Improve the quality of learning and teaching at universities and their contribution to cultural, economic and social development, by strengthening the scientific and research activities of the students and academic staff through competitive access to the above funding, and by allocating competitive grants specifically for research projects within the new funding system for higher education (end of 2004).

Note: The successful implementation of all of the above strategic goals is contingent upon the early adoption and implementation of new legislation, regulations and funding mechanisms for higher education at all levels, based upon best European practice.

Our pledges on education

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, by:

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

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

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 by adopting laws in the Entities and Cantons that are consistent with it.

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

Implementing modern legislation for pre-school education, and considering the need for development of contemporary legislation for adult education and appropriate legislation and instruments to support lifelong learning.

Delivering on our pledges

Pledge 5

Finance, management and legislative reform underpin the quality of education and its systematic reform.

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, by:

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.

Clarify the legislation/regulations governing the assignment of public revenue generation and expenditure responsibilities across various levels of government throughout the education sector in order to achieve the cost-effective and equitable delivery of educational services (2003-2004).

Establish on the entity and/or state level a student-based financing system for tertiary education that will serve to reduce fragmentation, promote efficient system-wide resource allocation, and facilitate mobility throughout BiH (2003-2004).

Reinvest efficiency gains in the education sector by increasing the share of spending for operations, maintenance and teaching materials, while at the same time, establishing incentives for teachers by offering professional development opportunities and revising teacher salaries as the number of positions in the sector is reduced over time.

Develop entity-level education equalisation funds to ensure equitable financing for all levels of education across sub-entity levels of government (cantons in FBiH and municipalities in RS) in order to correct financial imbalances and promote nationally uniform standards and norms.

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

Establish financially sustainable budget allocations based on per pupil/student funding methods for all education levels (primary, secondary, tertiary) that promote a more efficient use of human resources (teachers and non-teaching staff), school facilities and material support (2003-2004).

Promote the public accountability of spending by ensuring the transparency of budget allocations to academic institutions and schools, as well as revenues raised outside the public budget by these institutions (2003-2004).

Develop tools for multi-year operational planning at the level of schools and training institutions, and for medium-term strategic budgeting at the central level (2003).

Improve the execution of the budget in the education sector, in line with the overall public expenditure reform program (financial/cash management, public procurement, reporting, auditing), and improve the balance between budgeted allocations and actual spending.

Develop a plan to increase private and corporate contributions to higher and post-secondary education, and increase corporate contributions to secondary education.

Establish fair and transparent student loan and means-tested scholarship programs in tertiary education to ensure affordable cost sharing by beneficiaries of university education (2003).

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.

Submit a draft state-level law on education in primary and secondary schools to the State Parliament no later than 15 January 2003, with a view to its adoption no later than 24 April 2003 and implementation by mid-2003.

Establish a high-level expert working group, bringing together the OSCE, Council of Europe and OHR in co-ordination with the Ministries of Education at all levels of competence, to begin developing a common core curriculum (from 1 December 2002), completing work no later than 15 July 2003.

Establish an effective instrument to ensure that the common core curriculum and its implied European human rights standards, as prescribed by the state-level law on education in primary and secondary schools, are implemented throughout BiH (September 2003 at the latest).

Develop, adopt and implement laws in the Entities and Cantons that are consistent with the human rights and education principles and standards embedded in the state-level law (at least two months before the beginning of the school year (2004 - 2005)).

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.

Establish higher education legislation at the state and entity levels based upon the standards, instruments and criteria required for the implementation of the Bologna Declaration and Lisbon Convention (mid-2004).

Obtain agreement of the cantonal authorities in the Federation to defer their powers in the area of higher education to the entity level, in accordance with the Constitution of the Federation of BiH, to achieve overall consistency in legislation for higher education.

Develop, adopt and implement contemporary legislation for vocational education and training in keeping with the priority needs of the country and to prepare the schools to meet European labour market standards and foster the social and economic development of BiH (March 2004).

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

Develop, adopt and implement contemporary legislation for pre–school education in order to lay the groundwork for a productive and rewarding life for the children of BiH (mid-2005).

Establish a high-level expert working group tasked to consider contemporary legislation for adult education, as well as appropriate legislation and instruments to support a domestic life-long learning capacity in BiH, based on the terms of the UNESCO’s Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning, July 1997, and develop policy and legislation recommendations (end of 2003).