

Bosnia and Herzegovina: 2009 and Beyond

The OSCE and the International Education Reform Effort



Why Bosnia and Herzegovina still matters

A frozen conflict?

The core issues that fuelled the war still dominate:

- the nature and role of the state,
- the role of constituent peoples/minorities,
- identity politics/perceived national interests



Why Bosnia and Herzegovina still matters

- Continued state-building is needed to ensure that the simmering political conflict heads in the desired direction
- The goal is the emergence of a stable, peaceful, heterogeneous democracy rather than partition and division along ethno-national lines



Why Bosnia and Herzegovina still matters

- The challenge, in Europe's own backyard, is to enable the emergence of a multi-ethnic democracy based on the rule of law, power-sharing and a culture of compromise
- The success or failure of BiH in terms of European accession has far-ranging implications in today's world



Why the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina still matters

- Signing the SAA is an important step forward in BiH's long march towards full European integration
- However, there is a great difference between reform on paper and actual implementation of reform in unstable communities throughout BiH
- The OSCE MBiH is the only organisation that has the field presence to monitor progress on the ground in the most difficult reform



Why the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina still matters

- The EC's "acquis communautaire" (focus on public administration and economic reform critical to economic development) does not fully address BiH's particular post-war challenges of peace-building and statehood
- The OSCE MBiH is uniquely positioned to press for the most difficult post-war reforms while the EC/EUSR presses forward with transition reforms as part of the EU accession process



Why the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina still matters

- Unconditional technical assistance/public administration reform support does not address ethno-political discrimination at the heart of the current BiH education system
- If unaddressed, the end result may be three technically superior but still fundamentally divisive as well as divided education systems



Why Education in BiH Matters

- Division along ethnic lines - segregation or assimilation – has prevailed since the war
- BiH has the population of a larger European city, but 12 Ministries of Education and multiple, fragmented systems
- Ethno-politics, as the supreme force in education, is able to defeat reforms focused on quality (e.g. failure to introduce 9 year education, a European minimum standard, in most Croat majority regions)



Why Education in BiH Matters

- Children are schooled with “their” ethno-national group, using biased curricula in schools catering to one group only
- Most language, history, geography curricula deliberately cultivate national pride and prejudice
- Certain religious education curricula also cultivate national resentments



Why Education in BiH Matters

- Usora and Srebrenica/Bratunac cases: increasing separation shows not only the divisiveness of education, but also its liability to be exploited for divisive political goals
- 3 different groups of future citizens are being created (“little ethnic soldiers,” says a local politician)



Why Education in BiH Matters

- Each new generation of children in such a system – schooled to be ignorant, prejudiced or distrustful of the “ others” – is affecting the future cohesion of the country
- Well over half the population do not identify with the state of BiH
- Can the state of BiH survive this over the longer term?



Why Education in BiH Matters

- The type of education that is delivered formally and informally in BiH schools can make an enormous difference
- Modernisation of curricula and methods should promote the values of democratic citizenship, tolerance and respect for diversity, and the cultivation of complex identities
- Education for Peace, ‘civics’, introduction of multi-perspective history textbooks: all suggest ways to break the cycle of zero-sum politics
- These and similar efforts need to be expanded across the curricula



The Mission's Role

- The Mission works on institutional capacity-building and curricular reform, towards single, diversity-friendly standards for the whole country
- This is backed by actively promoting, at the school level, a culture of tolerance and respect for diversity
- This dual approach is unique in its BiH-wide scope, its community-targeted emphasis, its focus on hearts and minds; its long-term and immediate-term impact



The Mission's Role

Successes to date

- History and geography textbooks
- Education for All (access and completion)
- Culture of Religions
- National minorities workbook
- School civic bodies strengthened
- School boards strengthened
- The Brcko experience



Moving Forward

2009 and beyond

- Incremental curricular reform
- Promotion of tolerance and respect for diversity
- Support to state-level Education Agency that can help ensure lower-level implementation of laws in support of the state's domestic and international obligations
- Strengthen domestic institutions and bodies including school councils, school boards, director associations
- Helping them to network and lobby at state level
- Helping them to connect with equivalents abroad



Increasing Recognition of Education & Conflict Prevention

OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna

- The EU representative agreed *“that school curricula must be designed to educate tomorrow’s leaders to become citizens committed to tolerance, democratic norms and respect for human rights and shared the view that education reform is critical to long-term democratic stability”*
- The U.S. delegation agreed that work in education, *“is vitally necessary, if BiH’s citizens are to be instilled with a common view of their history, diversity, ethnic and religions tolerance, and other values that are at the heart of a stable, multiethnic state”*



Extra-budgetary Projects

Added, concrete projects add value to ongoing annual work

- Two projects aimed at addressing specific challenges
 - > History Curricular Reform
 - > Srebrenica Peer Mediation