



# Curricular Reform

Education reform is regarded as critical to the long-term stability of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina focuses on the content of education, the political framework for reform and the school environment inside and outside of the classroom to foster knowledge, values and worldviews necessary for constructive social engagement.

The Mission has actively supported primary and secondary school curricular reform since 2002, advocating for educational standards in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) to reflect human rights values and contemporary educational approaches common in the OSCE area. In recent years, the efforts of the Mission and partner institutions have succeeded in supporting history textbook reform, including the removal of offensive and hate speech, the introduction of reform, including elements of diversity and tolerance, to textbooks and curricula, and the organization of trainings for textbook authors, reviewers and teachers.

Beyond the fact that contemporary curricula and textbook standards are necessary for any democratic country, they also serve as long-term solutions to problems still present in BiH's post-war education system. These problems include: assimilation and segregation grounded in separate curricula for the three constituent peoples, the practice of bussing students to mono-ethnic schools, the "two schools under one roof" system and the problem of subjects listed within the "National Group of Subjects" continuing to show a serious element of bias. Most curricula are undergoing revision and the Mission is using this momentum to challenge the continuing presence of bias and discrimination.

A current focus of the Mission is to establish outcome-based curricular standards and competences reflecting contemporary learning objectives that promote inclusivity and respect for diversity among students. This process strives towards the introduction of new methodologies in the country's pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes and respective legislation reform. The Mission's key domestic partners in this area include the Agency for Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education (the Education

Agency), Pedagogical Institutes, Ministries of Education including the Ministry of Civil Affairs and the Conference of Ministers of Education.

## Finding Long-term Solutions

Curricula in its comprehensive scope, including school environments and daily practices in educational settings enable many schools in BiH to cater largely or solely for the ethnic majority. This is a serious situation for BiH – a post-conflict multi-ethnic and multi-confessional state – where all should have rights to equal educational opportunities. Breaking down barriers and moving beyond discriminatory policies is essential for the well-being of BiH's children and youth and for guaranteeing a positive future where all are able to receive an education in a comfortable and safe setting with their peers.

## History Teaching

The division of curricula and the existence of three different, exclusive and often mutually-opposed versions of history pose a considerable threat to social cohesion and a shared sense of citizenship and future in BiH. Recognizing the importance of history teaching in a post-conflict society, the Mission has been working with other international organizations to bring more contemporary methodologies to history teaching through the improvement of the textbooks and teaching methods used in schools in BiH.

To move forward on this issue, "*Guidelines for Textbook Writing and Evaluation of History Textbooks for Primary and Secondary Schools in BiH*" were developed by a group of local experts with support from the Mission and adopted



by all Ministries of Education. A new and substantially improved generation of textbooks has now been published in accordance with the *Guidelines*. As a result of the joint Council of Europe and Mission effort, a Teacher Manual on contemporary history teaching in schools was developed, published and distributed to schools. Currently the Mission is implementing the project *History for the Future – Towards Reconciliation through Education*, which seeks to establish common principles, outcomes and standards for teaching history for the whole country to ensure a common base of knowledge, culture and values for all students.

## Teaching about Religions

Within the BiH education system, the Mission supports the inclusion of inter-religious learning components in confessional religious education. The Mission further works to ensure the rights of students and parents who opt out of confessional religious education to have alternative subjects, and supports educational authorities in providing systematic solutions and choices for these students.

## Literature and Language Teaching

In order to reduce practices of segregation and discrimination on a linguistic basis in BiH schools, the Mission promotes the introduction of more inclusive practices and methodologies in BiH schools. Although the three official languages in BiH are mutually intelligible, language education is losing its first purpose – communication, while literature classes are often used to strengthen ethnic bias. To this end, the Mission is now working with local and international partners to develop a systematic strategy regarding all aspects of language teaching, especially the analysis of textbooks and readers, the training of authors and teachers in new methodological approaches and outcome-based curricular standards and skill-sets.

## Teaching about the National Minorities of BiH

The Mission is working to ensure that teaching and learning about BiH's 17 national minorities becomes part of every child's education, thereby increasing understanding about the richness of diversity within BiH. A country-wide extra-budgetary project, *Kaleidoscope*, has assisted both teachers and students in learning about the culture, heritage, origins and traditions of the national minorities in BiH and has helped students to challenge prejudices while promoting empathy, the value of diversity and cross-cultural understanding.

## Training Teachers

A crucial segment of all the above-mentioned activities is teacher training. The current pre-service and in-service professional development system of teachers in BiH is not sufficient and often does not keep teachers informed and educated about on-going developments in their subjects. To address this, the Mission collaborates with international and local partners to ensure that the principles of the EU Framework of Key Competences for Pedagogues and Teachers are systematically introduced throughout the country. The Mission strives to ensure that teacher training is systematized according to accepted standards and made effective in terms of tangible results in the classroom.

The OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina assists BiH in meeting its OSCE commitments and in progressing towards its stated goal of Euro-Atlantic integration by strengthening security and stability through completion of peace-building within the Dayton framework and developing inclusive political discourse and democratically accountable institutions that respect diversity, promote consensus and respect the rule of law. The Mission takes a comprehensive and integrated approach through its field presence, reflecting an emphasis on developing cohesive communities and on the timely identification of obstacles to progress.