

Correction of misleading press reports about the Conclusions of the Symposium on School Curricula

The OHR would like to correct misleading press reports about the Conclusions reached at the Symposium on School Curricula held in Sarajevo on February 7 and 8 and co-hosted by the OHR and UNESCO, in particular as they were reported in the TV Erotek 19.00 hours news show on February 11.

According to the Erotek report in which Deputy Federation Minister of Education Simun Musa was quoted, the participants of this Symposium agreed that “three parallel education systems based on the Swiss model” should be established in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

This is not correct. The participants did indeed agree on the Swiss model as a base for the future education system in BiH – but the Swiss model is based on parallel school curricula with a high degree of coordination and exchange as well as some common core elements. As a matter of fact, the participants of the Symposium established that the three parallel education systems currently used in BiH cement ethnic segregation and are based on outdated teaching and learning methods, which are not in accordance with European standards. They concluded that this urgently needs to be changed by a comprehensive reform of the education system and curricula.

The introduction of the Swiss model in Bosnia and Herzegovina will require the establishment of a Standing Conference of Education Ministers with input from pedagogical institutes under the supervision of the OHR, UNESCO and the Council of Europe. This Conference will have the task to coordinate and

exchange information on changes of the curricula, and to ensure that each curriculum includes some joint core elements (such as Human Rights and Civics education) and modules teaching about the cultural, literary and linguistic heritage of the other two constituent peoples. For example, both the Latin and the Cyrillic scripts should be taught throughout the country.

The participants of the Symposium also agreed that school certificates must be mutually recognized in order to allow for cross-Entity mobility and that legislation must be adopted that will permit the integration of minority and returnee children in areas where one curriculum is dominant. One way to achieve this would be the employment of teachers from the other constituent peoples to teach national subjects to the minority and returnee children. Further, they agreed that textbooks from Croatia and the FRY will no longer be used; the country of reference must be Bosnia and Herzegovina. Lastly, they agreed that all teachers in BiH need to be retrained.

The participants of the Symposium included officials from the Entity and Cantonal Education Ministries, international education experts from across Europe, domestic professors, teachers, pedagogues and students, representatives of civic society and representatives from the OHR, UNESCO, the Council of Europe and the World Bank.

The OHR considers the conclusions reached at the Symposium a good base for a reform of the current education system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which can no longer be tolerated in its segregated form. A meeting with the Entity Education Ministers is scheduled for February 24 in Brcko, at which the Conclusions will be further discussed and operationalized.