

PDHR Donald Hays calls for urgent education reform

Principal Deputy High Representative Donald Hays today called for education reform as a matter of urgency, in order to promote economic recovery and competitiveness.

“Failure to address the quality and state of education offered to the youth of this country would be nothing less than catastrophic,” the PDHR told a conference in Sarajevo. “While other countries are busily training their young people in Information Technology and the other disciplines preparing them for today’s business environment, students in Bosnia and Herzegovina can, in most cases, only dream about up-to-date tuition in high-tech subjects.” He said that inadequate school facilities and educational materials and substandard tuition were diminishing Bosnia and Herzegovina’s skills base.

The conference, organised by OHR, dealt with policies which can be applied throughout the BiH school system using the successful education model developed in the Brcko District; it also considered the future of primary and secondary education as a whole. Federation Minister for Education Mujo Demirovic and RS Minister for Education Gojko Savanovic participated, as did the Head of the Brcko District Education Department, Esad Atic.

The PDHR acknowledged the steps that have already been taken to eliminate nationalist rhetoric from textbooks and harmonise the curricula in both Entities, and he highlighted the success of Brcko District in introducing a joint syllabus. In Bosnia and Herzegovina as a whole, he said, “The curriculum must lead to universally recognised examinations and norms established

throughout Europe if this country is to compete with its neighbours in the marketplace.”

The PDHR stressed that the real work of educational reform – replacing the old-fashioned, information-intensive and non-interactive style of teaching inherited from the pre-war regime – has only just begun. He emphasised that international organisations would seek to initiate programmes properly designed to complement and assist the efforts of the domestic authorities. The International Community, he said, cannot be the lead agency in reforming education in Bosnia and Herzegovina. “This must be something you design, you commit yourselves to and ultimately you ally yourselves with as a national priority.”