

The High Representative calls for the creation of a Higher Education Council

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, has called for problems in Higher Education to be urgently addressed and supports the need to establish a Higher Education Council as recommended in a report made public last week by the World Bank and the Council of Europe at an education round table hosted by the OHR. This proposal has also received support from political and higher education representatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The proposed Council would advise and oversee academic standards and accreditation, and promote strategic thinking and improved management in higher education. It would also act as a forum and facilitator for the international relations of the sector. The Council would engage in the managing of funds and develop a system for mutual recognition of degrees and examinations and a system of institutional quality assessment and self-assessment in line with European practice. The Council would undertake strategic planning, the development of relevant regulations and the collation of information necessary to promote and plan reform. It would not try to impose common curricula or courses, but develop cooperation between institutions. At a meeting attended by entity Ministers of Education Rizvanbegovic and Suzic and representatives of Deputy Federation Education Minister Musa last week in Sarajevo, a verbal commitment to the creation of a Higher Education Steering Board, made up of an equal number of academics from the three constituent peoples, was given. This represents a first step towards the institutionalisation of a Higher Education Council.

The High Representative and other international community

representatives, including UNESCO, the World Bank, the Council of Europe and the EU, emphasised that education in Bosnia and Herzegovina is one of the areas where professional cooperation and coordination across constituent groups is necessary if standards are to reach those set by Europe. The High Representative expects to see significant progress in this field. Further obstruction can only impede the prospects of the young people of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The High Representative addressed the guests at the opening ceremony of Sarajevo University's new Postgraduate course in European Studies on Saturday January 15th, 2000. His speech supported the findings and recommendations of the 'Education in BiH' report.