

Schwarz-Schilling: Education must not be a hostage of nationalism



The High Representative and EU Special Representative, Christian Schwarz-Schilling, called today on the Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina to finally pass a long-overdue Law on Higher Education, in a speech to students at the University of Tuzla.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has signed up to the Bologna Process but failed to enact a state-level law on higher education.

“I am still hoping that this failure will be rectified before I leave office at the end of June,” Mr Schwarz-Schilling said. “If not, the university students of this country will continue to suffer: their diplomas will not be recognised abroad and they will have no access to European exchange schemes.”

The High Representative and EU Special Representative pointed out that, in his first speech to Parliament over a year ago, he had already urged deputies to pass a Higher Education Law without further delay. “More than a year later, I am still waiting for this to happen.”

“If the politicians and citizens of this country want to join and then compete inside the EU, they are going to have to embrace European standards and values in the field of higher education, as well as build a fundamentally modernised

system," Mr Schwarz-Schilling said.

In the field of Higher Education, the High Representative and EU Special Representative stressed that progress was needed on four key fronts:

- Bosnia and Herzegovina should have state-level legislative framework consonant with the European Area of Higher Education rather than old Yugoslav practice;
- The financial framework according to which higher education is funded should be reformed and harmonized to allow a more equitable, efficient and transparent distribution of resources;
- A framework for setting policy, deciding strategy and planning should be established at the state level, but with a clear perspective that such a framework could move to the regional level, especially for postgraduate studies and research; and
- A new institutional framework for individual universities should make participatory decision-making the norm, protect the autonomy of universities, and improve their governance and management.

The adoption of such a reform package would place the country within the ambit of the European Area of Higher Education. "It is a system that reintegrates Bosnia and Herzegovina in the European and worldwide community of learning, scholarship and research," Mr Schwarz-Schilling said.

Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina can no longer be "a hostage of nationalism". Instead, it should strive to be "democratic, open and inclusive". If no such system is created, the leaders of this country would have failed students "not just as future citizens and voters, but also as employable workers, scientists, entrepreneurs and artists," the High Representative and EU Special Representative warned in his speech.

The full text of the High Representative and EU Special Representative's [speech](#) is available at www.ohr.int and www.eusrbih.org.