

OHR's Statement at the International Agency's Joint Press Conference

Better Statistics Means More Jobs

The BiH Council of Ministers must end the delay in appointing a director and deputy director of the BiH Statistics Agency. Until this is done, policymakers cannot have a clear idea of what the BiH economy is actually like, and investors will have little incentive to put money into the economy. As a result, the economy will not create the new jobs that are desperately needed in order to improve living standards.

The link between statistics and jobs is fully analysed in the Spring issue of OHR's Economic Newsletter, published today. In his introduction, the Principal Deputy High Representative, Donald Hays, notes that BiH is still not attracting the levels of foreign investment it needs in order to secure economic takeoff. One of the reasons for this is the negative picture of this country as an investment destination that is projected by inadequate and misleading statistics. The official rate of unemployment is about double the actual rate, and the size of the economy is underreported by about a quarter. As Ambassador Hays points out: "If this situation is not addressed, BiH will have the dubious distinction of creating a worse picture of its own economy than is warranted and thus working officially against its own interests."

Higher Education Law

The World Bank's deadline for the BiH authorities to adopt the Higher Education Law expires at the weekend.

If the law is not passed, BiH will not receive a 42-million dollar World Bank credit.

This is a lot of money – it would give each university professor in BiH 3,000 KM to spend on upgrading services to students. Invested properly it would have a direct and positive impact on classrooms and lecture theatres all across the country. It would allow university teachers to do their jobs better and it would improve the demanding conditions in which BiH students are obliged to study.

But it's not just a matter of money.

The law, which has built-in guarantees protecting the language and culture of the peoples of BiH, will introduce modern European standards to BiH Higher Education. This is an essential element in consolidating the academic integrity of BiH universities.

The law also fulfils a key Council of Europe post-accession criterion.

It is clearly in the interests of BiH students, BiH teachers and the people of BiH as a whole that this law is passed. The OHR expects the people's representatives to reflect this fact.

Another note on education: when it comes to administrative unification of two schools under one roof in Canton 6 we would like to confirm that after careful assessment the HDZ has been fined in accordance with the Decision of the High Representative from 26 April 2004. The HDZ in Canton 6 will continue to be fined each week until they have implemented the administrative merger of remaining divided schools.

The High Representative will give a press conference at 13.00 this afternoon at the OHR. The topic will be the SDS financial report.